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HISTORY

OF THE

SECESSION CHURCH.

STORY

SECTION THREE



*Mississippi*  
HISTORY

OF THE

SECESSION CHURCH.

BY THE

REV. JOHN M'KERROW,

BRIDGE OF TEITH.

VOL. II.

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# HISTORY

OF THE

## SECESSION CHURCH.

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AFTER the termination of the war for independence, which the Americans had successfully waged with the mother country, the brethren belonging to the Pennsylvanian pres-



bytery appear to have become jealous of the jurisdiction claimed and exercised over them by the Synod in Scotland. The nature of the connexion existing betwixt them and the Synod, gave occasion to their being reproached, by some of their transatlantic neighbours, with being still in subjection to a foreign power. It appears to have been insinuated, by those who were hostile to every kind of connexion with Great Britain, that the ecclesiastical court, to whom they professed allegiance, might interfere with their civil rights as citizens, as well as with their religious privileges as christians. The idea also had taken possession of their mind, that, as the American provinces were now independent of foreign jurisdiction, so they too might, as a presbytery, aspire to be, if not altogether on a footing of equality with, at least less dependant than they had hitherto been, upon the Synod at home.

Influenced by such considerations, they prepared and transmitted to the Synod an act on this subject, which was not well relished by many of the brethren at home. This act was accompanied by a letter explanatory of their reasons for passing it, and craving that the Synod would consider what might be the most proper and effectual means for preserving the connexion betwixt the supreme court and the brethren in America; so that the union might be agreeable to Scripture, profitable to both parties, and as little liable as possible to the cavils and exceptions of enemies. They took the liberty, also, of suggesting the following articles, as essentially necessary to the preservation of a real and a profitable union betwixt the Synod and the presbytery:—

“ *First*, That we be of one heart and mind, both as to the truth of the gospel, and as to the duty of bearing witness to it, by a public and judicial testimony against the injuries done to it, in the age and place of the world in which our lot is cast. *Second*, That we act consistently with the profession we make, carefully avoiding every thing which might reasonably be considered as an approbation of those who are

in course of backsliding, and who are opposing themselves, if not directly to us, yet to our brethren engaged in the same cause with us. *Third*, That whatsoever is a matter of general concern, especially what respects the profession of our faith in one church, be communicated as quickly as possible to the other, that it may be approved of, or objections offered against it, as those to whom it is communicated may see cause. *Fourth*, That no person under censure by one church be received by the other, without such an acknowledgment of his offence, as those among whom the scandal happened would have judged a sufficient evidence of his repentance. *Fifth*, That the strong help the weak, all having a respect to the one Lord whom we serve, and bearing one another's burdens, that we thus fulfil the law of Christ."

There was transmitted, at the same time, a copy of a formula of questions to be put to elders at their ordination, which the presbytery had sanctioned, without any acknowledgment of the authority of the Synod. When these documents were received, some of the members expressed their disapprobation of the course which the American brethren were pursuing, and demurred about sending any farther supply to the presbytery. The Synod were desirous of preserving, on the one hand, their ecclesiastical authority as a supreme court, and of maintaining, on the other, the connexion which had hitherto existed betwixt them and the presbytery of Pennsylvania; and a numerous committee was appointed to take the whole affair into consideration, and to prepare an overture on the subject. It was also agreed, that, in consideration of the peculiar circumstances in which the brethren in America were placed, all sympathy should be shown them; and a recommendation was given to the several presbyteries to deal with ministers, preachers, and students within their bounds, with a view to the obtaining of additional missionaries.

When the committee on American affairs gave in their report, two different overtures were presented. This gave rise to a long discussion, which terminated in the Synod de-

laying to adopt either of the overtures, and agreeing to transmit a copy of the committee's report to the presbytery of Pennsylvania that they might know the state of the question before the Synod, and that they might be heard before any final decision was adopted ; and they were required to transmit, without delay, their opinion to the Synod. From this resolution Professor Bruce and Mr Bunyan dissented ; and the following reasons of dissent were afterwards presented by Mr Bruce, which are here inserted at full length, on account of the good sense and sound constitutional doctrine which they contain.

“ *First*, Neither of these overtures, as laid, appeared to meet with the approbation of the court ; and there was little probability of any of them being adopted, whatever return might be made from America.

“ *Second*, To transmit them in that crude state, when so many objections, apparently of great force, lay against several things contained in them, some of which seem to me to be self-inconsistent, was, in my view, to betray the honour of the Synod, and to expose themselves, in the eye of the world and of their brethren at a distance, to such animadversions or censures as these things might justly deserve.

“ *Third*, It seems, at any rate, to be altogether out of the regular line of judicative procedure, for a superior and supreme court to refer their own proper business to the cognizance of an inferior, or to regulate or suspend their decisions, upon the event of an express approbation or disapprobation of those who owe subjection to them in the Lord.

“ *Fourth*, To do so in the present case, appears to me to be so much the more strange and highly absurd, in regard the brethren, to whose consideration the overtures have been submitted, were actually in the state of parties to the cause, the propriety of their proceedings and conduct being the very matter under the review and judgment of this court ; so it is in reality to make them judges in their own cause. And while one or both of the overtures find fault with some part of their proceedings, can any thing be more disorderly



and ridiculous than to ask them, upon supposition of their being in a fault, whether they will be pleased to be accounted censurable or blameable by this court ?

“ *Fifth*, Though I carefully abstain here from touching the merits of the cause yet undecided, and desire cautiously to avoid, as far as possible, imputing blame to our brethren, for whom I feel the greatest respect and sympathy ; yet, from the mode of procedure pursued by that presbytery, with reference to this Synod, they could not surely have a claim to expect that it should break through rule, and sacrifice its authority, in order to grant them such indulgence : They having proceeded, at their own hand, to disclaim or explain away their wonted subordination, and to state somewhat new, if not different, terms of fellowship with it, than what had hitherto taken place, without consulting or waiting for the mind of the Synod on these interesting subjects. If they adventured to decide on the rights of Synod, unconsulted and unheard, and to assume to themselves some new, controverted, not to say unconstitutional, privileges, in a summary, peremptory, and final manner, there could be no severity nor indelicacy, after that, in this Synod asserting their own constitutional privileges, and in proceeding to give judgment in this cause, according to the light they could obtain, and as might appear for edification, without making any such reference.

“ *Sixth*, As the acts of that presbytery respecting this cause have been transmitted in the form of decided and finished deeds, an adherence to which is considered by them as the basis of future intercourse, they seem thereby to have precluded this Synod from the liberty of transacting with them judicially in any other shape than that proposed by themselves : In which case there may be reason to doubt whether this step of transmitting and referring these overtures, be not so far, *ipso facto*, a tacit compliance with, and sanction to, their plan, and consequently a giving way, at least for a time, to the abolition of their own judicative authority with regard to our brethren and their people in

America, and with regard to all missionaries that from time to time may be sent thither.”

These reasons of dissent were entered on the Synod's record, and a committee was appointed to answer them ; but if any answers were returned, they were not recorded.

At their meeting in May, 1788, the Synod resumed the consideration of the affair from the presbytery of Pennsylvania. A letter was read from that presbytery, containing remarks on the papers which had been transmitted to them ; and this letter was accompanied by an enactment of their own, which they had prepared on the subject, and which they requested the Synod to adopt. After considerable discussion, the business was again referred to a committee, who were required to take all the documents into their serious consideration, and to report before the close of the present meeting. The result of their deliberations was the following overture, which, after being subjected to the necessary corrections and amendments, was finally adopted, and was ordered to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to the brethren in America :—

“ The Synod having taken into consideration an act of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, dated the 2d of June, 1786, declaring the nature of their connexion with this Synod, and also sundry other papers transmitted by that presbytery, relative to the same subject ; And desiring to remove or prevent all misunderstandings which might now or afterwards mar a profitable intercourse between those in this country who are endeavouring to bear witness to the truth of the gospel against the common defection, and those in North America who are disposed to join with them in the same cause ; they declare, That the subordination of the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania to this Synod has, from the beginning, been no more than a scriptural union, according to the plan of presbyterial church government : That, being wholly of a spiritual nature, it never did affect any in their civil rights or interests ; and, consequently, that there was not the smallest ground for the adversaries of that

presbytery to reproach them as subordinate to, and under the control of, a foreign jurisdiction,—as holding the estates, that is the churches they possess, at the will of persons beyond seas : That, in answering applications made to them from that part of the world, this Synod has been at no small trouble in sending ministers, and in procuring charitable contributions for defraying the expenses of such missions : That, in what they have done, they have studied a regard to the interests of the kingdom of Christ, neither receiving nor expecting any benefit whatsoever in return, further than the testimonies of their own consciences bearing witness of their not being unwilling or inactive, when called to labour for promoting the knowledge of Christ in America, and for the assistance of such as there professed a desire of being faithful in his cause : That the wavering and defection of many in that country, who once professed to join with this Synod in testifying against such latitudinarian schemes as they now approve, has not discouraged the Synod from assisting the remnant who have endeavoured to hold fast the profession of their faith.

“ Wherefore, though the above mentioned act, passed by the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania, the 2d of June, 1786, as it related to matters in which the Synod was concerned, as well as that presbytery, ought not to have been passed till the Synod was consulted, and judgment given by it ; yet, considering the peculiar circumstances of that presbytery, the Synod, without insisting further on any irregularity which may have been committed in the passing of that act, agree, that the intercourse between this Synod and the associate presbytery of Pennsylvania shall, in time coming, be regulated according to what is expressed in the articles that follow :—

“ *First*, That as to what relates to scandals, or causes of a personal and private nature, the Synod, from their intercourse with the presbytery, for about thirty-five years past, have no reason to expect that appeals in such causes will be prosecuted ; and they judge the prosecution of such appeals



would be inexpedient and improper at such a very great distance.

“ *Second*, That, in the case of any difference arising in the presbytery of Pennsylvania, about the profession of the faith, or about any truth or duty affecting their connexion with this Synod, it is necessary for this Synod to know on what side truth and duty lie : The Synod, therefore, judge it equitable and necessary that causes of this kind may be brought before them, by reference or appeal.

“ *Third*, Though the errors in doctrine, corruptions of the worship of God, and defections from the reformation testimony, prevailing in Britain and America may be materially the same ; yet, as these, in several instances, assume a different appearance, and are promoted under different pretences in the last of these countries, the Synod therefore judge it expedient for the presbytery of Pennsylvania to state the profession of their faith, so as that it may always be a direct and proper testimony against the evils by which that part of the Lord’s vineyard, in which they labour, is more immediately endangered ; provided that presbytery do not give up any truth testified for by this Synod, nor enter into any connexion with such as oppose themselves to any part of our christian and witnessing profession.

“ *Fourth*, The formula of questions to be put to ecclesiastical office-bearers, at their ordination in said presbytery of Pennsylvania, ought to contain an engagement to maintain the truth of the gospel against such as oppose it in that part of the world. But the questions in said formula ought to be as near to those put by this Synod, in Britain and Ireland, as the state of the church in America will admit ; and none of these shall contradict the testimony maintained by this Synod : And further, it is requisite that the said formula should contain an engagement to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, in contending for the faith and order of the church, as a part of the same witnessing body with this Synod.

“ *Fifth*, As in making confession of sin, the presbytery of

Pennsylvania ought to take particular notice of those offences, backslidings, and transgressions of the laws of God, which are to be found among themselves, and among the inhabitants of the land where they dwell; and as they cannot join in the very same confession of sins made by this Synod, in acts for humiliation and fasting, and also in public covenanting, by reason of some things in these peculiar to this country: the Synod, therefore, judge it expedient for that presbytery to proceed, as the Lord may give them opportunity, to renew their solemn covenant engagements, in a manner agreeable to their circumstances, provided still that the acknowledgment of sin and engagement to duties made by that presbytery, though necessarily different in words, be the same as to the principal matter and design, with the confession and engagement made in solemn covenanting by this Synod.

“ *Sixth*, If the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall be found departing from the profession made by them, and acting contrary to these articles, it cannot, in that case, be expected that the Synod will countenance them in such a course, by sending ministers to their assistance. The offence must be removed, before the Synod can reasonably appoint any of their number to take part with that presbytery: And on sufficient evidence, that the said presbytery have gone into a state of apostacy from their former testimony and ordination vows, the Synod claim it as competent to them, to pass a judicial condemnation of the said presbytery, as no longer a part of the same witnessing body. On the other hand, if the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find any thing in the proceedings of this Synod, which they judge contrary to truth and duty, they shall have the same liberty, as others connected with the Synod, to remonstrate, protest, or testify against the same.

“ *Seventh*, If the Synod shall be informed as to any member belonging to the presbytery of Pennsylvania, that he acts contrary to his profession and to these articles, they shall transmit an account of this matter to that presbytery, who shall inquire into it, and satisfy the Synod as to the accused,

by showing either that he is not guilty, or that he has been censured according to the nature of his offence : And, in like manner, if the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall find cause of complaint, as to any of the brethren in this country, they shall inform the presbytery to which the member complained of belongs, who shall judge of that matter according to the ordinary rules of procedure in such cases.

“ *Eighth*, As, by the laws of Christ’s house, we are bound to assist one another, as the Lord gives us opportunity ; particularly in the duty of maintaining a testimony against the general and increasing defection of this generation from the truth and cause of our Lord Jesus Christ : This Synod, therefore, resolve that they will endeavour, as they formerly and of late have done, to answer the requests of the presbytery of Pennsylvania, by appointing and sending ministers or preachers to their assistance, according as there may be need for other labourers in that part of the Lord’s vineyard ; and for this end, they shall use all proper means to persuade such as may be appointed for that service to undertake it.

“ *Ninth*, As the Synod shall communicate to the presbytery of Pennsylvania such of their acts as are of general concern, particularly such as respect the profession of the faith made by this Synod ; so that presbytery shall transmit to the Synod all acts of the same nature passed by them : And no new terms of communion shall be enacted by them, till the overtures concerning the same shall have been transmitted to this Synod, for their consideration ; that by these means unity may be maintained, misunderstandings arising from want of due information prevented, and the most speedy and effectual methods taken to remove any difference which may arise.

“ Further, the Synod declare, that as, agreeably to this act, the presbytery of Pennsylvania shall have all the aid this Synod can afford by sending ministers to their assistance, when they may be wanted, and interposing their authority for this end ; so they will endeavour to give speedy judgment in matters of faith which may come before them, by refer-



ence or appeal from the above mentioned presbytery, and do every thing in their power for promoting the testimony in North America : The design of those articles being in no instance to hurt them, but help them, and to strengthen their hands in the work of the Lord."

Messrs Bunyan and Bruce craved, that their dissent from the above overture might be marked, and reserved to themselves the liberty of bringing forward their reasons of dissent (should they see cause), at a future meeting.

During the course of these proceedings, Mr Adam Gib, minister at Edinburgh, paid the debt of nature ;\* and by his death, that branch of the Secession Church, whose proceedings are recorded in this part of the narrative, was deprived of an active and most efficient member. While a student at the University of Edinburgh, he was in the habit of attending the meetings of the General Assembly, and was so disgusted with their arbitrary proceedings, that he had formed the resolution, even before the Secession commenced, of disclaiming all connexion with the judicatories of the Established Church. When the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in October 1735, ordered the intruder to be enrolled in the parish of Muckhart, to which Mr Gib belonged, he presented to the Synod a formal declaration of secession from the Establishment ; and, in the month of December the same year, he appeared, along with other commissioners from Muckhart, at the meeting of the Associate Presbytery, and laid upon their table the first declaration of adherence which they had yet received. He became a member of the Presbytery in April 1741, when he was ordained minister of the associate congregation of Edinburgh. From that period till his death, he bore a prominent part in almost all the transactions, in which the Secession Church was concerned. When Mr Alexander Moncreiff of Abernethy died, the Synod were desirous that he should succeed him as Theological Professor ; but he declined accepting of the charge. His writings furnish abundant evidence of his strong polemical

\* Mr Gib died on the 18th of June, 1788.

tendencies. Not a few of the productions he has left behind, owed their origin to the controversies in which he was engaged. In his controversial pamphlets, he displays, for the most part, a clear and masculine understanding, combined with considerable warmth of temper, and occasionally an undue asperity of language. According to the views, which he entertained, he laboured strenuously to uphold and vindicate the cause of his Master against all assailants; and if he sometimes erred in his mode of doing so, he is entitled to respect for the fidelity and boldness with which, as a minister of the gospel, he defended the faith against what he deemed the prevailing heresies and corruptions of the times. His name also deserves an honourable place in this record, on account of his early and devoted attachment to the cause of the Secession, and on account of the unwearied efforts, which he made, during a long life, to promote its success.

When the General Associate Synod met in May, 1789, an urgent application was addressed to them, from the session and congregation of Pictou in Nova Scotia, craving that Mr Æneas M'Bean, a Gaelic preacher, might be sent out to them, to take part in the ministry along with Mr M'Gregor; and in support of their application, they urged the destitute condition of the Highlanders, who had emigrated to that part of the globe. This communication was accompanied by a letter from Mr M'Gregor, enforcing the request of the people. The Synod deeply sympathized in their situation, and were disposed to grant them all the assistance in their power; but Mr M'Bean's services were much needed amongst the Highlanders in the north of Scotland. The Secession congregation in Inverness were desirous to obtain him for their minister; and the presbytery of Elgin represented the great necessity there was for his labours being continued amongst the Gaelic population in that part of the country. The Synod felt the force of these representations, and they delayed, till next meeting, giving any decision in the matter. In the mean time, they authorised the presby-

tery of Elgin to ordain Mr M'Bean at large, with a view to his being settled either at Inverness, or sent to Nova Scotia, as they might afterwards decide; and they appointed a letter to be written to Mr M'Gregor and the people of Pictou, stating the destitute situation of the inhabitants of the North of Scotland, as the reason of the delay. They also renewed their former resolution to encourage Gaelic students in the prosecution of their studies, by giving them assistance (should it be required), out of their fund, and they recommended it to the presbyteries and provincial synods to have particular respect to the education of such students.

At their next meeting, in the spring of the following year (1790), the same parties again appeared before the Synod, urging their respective claims to the services of Mr M'Bean; and notwithstanding the strong case made out, on behalf of the Highlanders at home, the Synod showed the deep interest which they felt in the spiritual welfare of their countrymen abroad, by giving their decision in favour of the congregation of Pictou. Mr M'Bean, however, stated some difficulties about undertaking the mission, and a committee was appointed to converse with him. After some time they reported, that they had been unsuccessful in removing his objections; and the presbytery of Glasgow, who acted on behalf of the people of Pictou, not considering it expedient to insist on his fulfilling the Synod's appointment, he was afterwards settled at Inverness.

A dispute having arisen in the congregation of Edinburgh (now vacant by the death of Mr Gib), "concerning the trust and management of the money arising from seat rents, and the accountableness of the seat-letters and treasurer to the session,"—a representation and petition from the session brought the matter before the presbytery, who referred it for decision to the supreme court. The subject was fully discussed by the Synod, and after all parties had been heard, the following judgment was given:—"That though this Synod are not to be considered as entertaining any doubt, that all the affairs of any congregation, considered as a religious



society, are of right under the management of the session of said congregation : yet they advise the elders of the congregation of Edinburgh to exercise their power in such a manner as may be most agreeable to the members of their congregation, so as that all affairs may be managed to the satisfaction of the whole ; And considering the animosities and confusions subsisting in said congregation, they further advise, that the session call a meeting of the congregation of Edinburgh to choose a treasurer, and seat-letters ; the treasurer and seat-letters who shall be chosen in said meeting being always subject to the direction and review of the session.” In the month of August, the same year (1790), the presbytery of Edinburgh gave a decision, “ determining that such a standing committee” (as had obtained for some time past in the congregation of Edinburgh), “ with pretended powers from the congregation to manage the affairs of it, independent of the session, is irregular and disorderly, and should from this time be discontinued.” Against this decision a protest and appeal were taken to the ensuing meeting of Synod. The Synod, without a vote, dismissed the protest as groundless and unreasonable, and affirmed the sentence of the presbytery of Edinburgh. At a subsequent meeting of Synod, a remonstrance and petition were presented against this deed, but the Synod adhered to their decision.\*

A representation was laid before the Synod, at this meeting, on behalf of the “ Presbyterian inhabitants of Upper Canada, called loyalists, in the districts of Kingston, and New Cornwall, in the province of Quebec,” stating that they were destitute of all means of religious instruction, having neither

\* Of late years several instances have occurred, in Secession congregations, of managers requiring sessions to account to them for all the money collected at the church doors, from the voluntary offerings of the people. This is quite contrary to presbyterian order, and is at variance with the sound decision given by the General Associate Synod in the above case. The Session, according to the presbyterian order, are the only constitutional overseers of a congregation, “ considered as a religious society, and all its affairs are of right under their management.”

ministers, nor Bibles, nor catechisms ; and that, living in such a remote quarter of the globe, they had no opportunity of procuring books, even though they had money wherewith to purchase them ; surrounded, as they were, by heathens and Roman Catholics, they expressed their fears lest their children should grow up in ignorance, and lest they themselves should be seduced into popery, or sink into a state of heathenism ; and they craved assistance from the Synod, to enable them to procure a supply of religious books, and of catechisms for their children. In answer to this application, the Synod appointed a committee to correspond on the subject with Mr Moncrieff, treasurer to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge among the poor ; and the information thus obtained was to be transmitted to the provincial synods, that such relief might be granted as they should judge expedient.

By the persevering efforts of the Synod, in sending out brethren to America, the presbytery of Pennsylvania had nearly recovered its former strength. The union, which had taken place betwixt the greater portion of its members and the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery, in 1782, had almost annihilated it. We have already seen that Messrs William Marshall and James Clarkson were the only clerical members, who remained faithful to the testimony. Little more than a year elapsed, when their hands were strengthened by the mission of Mr Thomas Beveridge ; and in the month of October, 1788, they received a fresh reinforcement, by the names of Messrs David Goodwillie, and John Anderson being added to their roll. Soon after this, Mr Matthew Henderson, one of their original number, made a confession of his sin “ in departing from his former profession ;” and having declared himself a true penitent, was permitted again to take his seat amongst them. Mr David Somerville, minister at Strathaven, having resigned his charge of that congregation in August, 1790, set sail for America, and connected himself with the brethren of Pennsylvania ; and, in the following year, another addition was

made to their number by Mr John Cree, one of the preachers whom the Synod had sent out, being ordained at New York. On the day of his ordination, the presbytery engaged in the work of covenanting.

While the Synod were thus fostering, with parental fondness, the presbytery of Pennsylvania, they were earnestly requested to send out a labourer to another district of America. A number of people belonging to the county of Mecklenburgh, in North Carolina, had formerly made application for a minister to be sent; and they had remitted a sum of money to assist in defraying the expense of the mission. They again renewed their call, and craved that the money might be employed on behalf of any brother, whom the Synod might be pleased to send. An application was, at the same time, made for a labourer to be sent out to Amherst in Nova Scotia. Both of these petitions were favourably received; but the Synod found themselves much fettered in answering them, by the difficulty, which they had, of procuring persons who were willing to undertake these missions. There was ample employment for their preachers at home. The demands made for their services were, indeed, more numerous than they could well supply. Still they considered it their duty to send the gospel to those who were destitute of it abroad, and they made every exertion for this purpose. With a view to encourage their preachers to undertake the transatlantic missions, they agreed, that if any who went on these missions should find, after a trial of a few years, that they could not remain, they should be at liberty to return, and the Synod pledged themselves to defray the expenses of their journey homeward.

Mr Thomas Smith was appointed to go to North Carolina, and the presbytery of Glasgow was authorised to take the necessary steps with a view to his ordination. But Mr Smith positively refused to submit to the appointment; so that the hopes, which the people of Mecklenburgh county had fondly cherished, of obtaining a minister, were for a season frustrated. After some delay, two young men who were



students of divinity, Messrs John Brown and Duncan Ross, expressed their willingness to go on a mission to Nova Scotia. The Synod eagerly availed themselves of their offer, amid so many disappointments which they had lately experienced, and they enjoined, that, after having completed their course of study, the provincial synod of Perth should take the charge of getting them licensed and ordained, and sent off, without delay, to the place of their destination. They also appointed a collection to be made, throughout the several congregations, to defray the expense of the mission; they further ordained, that so soon as one or more ministers should arrive in the country, besides Mr M'Gregor, they should constitute themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of the Associate Presbytery of Nova Scotia. Some time after this, the Synod were gratified by receiving intelligence, that these young men had reached the scene of their labours, and that they had, in obedience to the injunction of the Synod, constituted themselves, along with Mr M'Gregor, into a presbytery.\*

At this period, considerable attention was excited, especially in the West of Scotland, by a process carried on against one of the ministers of the national church, for heresy. The result of the process produced an impression exceedingly unfavourable to the interests of the Establishment, because it afforded decisive proof that many of the ministers of that church were the abettors of socinian, as well as of arminian doctrine. It tended also to strengthen the grounds of the Secession, and showed how necessary her existence was to the maintenance of pure and undefiled religion in the country. In this case the church courts of the Secession deemed it necessary to warn the people against the dangerous errors, that were so openly propagated; and the publications, that were issued both by synods and by ministers belonging to the Secession, were well calculated to serve the cause of truth,

\* The associate presbytery of Nova Scotia was formed on the 7th of July, 1795.

by giving a faithful exposure of the unscriptural nature of the tenets that were published.

The person against whom this process was instituted, was Dr William M'Gill, one of the ministers of the Established Church in Ayr. In 1786, he published a book, entitled a *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, in which he taught, in the most undisguised and offensive manner, sentiments totally at variance with the Scriptures, and with the standards of his own church. He taught that Christ was a person of our own order, and that, although he was invested with an extraordinary office, and endued with extraordinary powers, yet he was not God equal with the Father. He endeavoured to explain away the doctrine of the atonement, by affirming that Christ did not die as the substitute of sinners; that his priesthood and sacrifice were merely figurative; that his errand into the world was not to purchase salvation for men, but to make a clear and distinct revelation of the rule of our obedience, to exemplify it in his holy life, and to assure sinners of their obtaining pardon upon their repentance, and of their being accepted upon their sincere obedience. He inculcated on this point, "that next to the mercy of God, which is never to be forgotten, the benefits of our redemption by Christ, flow chiefly from the righteousness and holiness of his life; and particularly from the eminent patience, piety, submission, and benevolence displayed at the close of it, which avail with God, in favour of sinners, in the same manner as do the piety and virtue of good men in general; only the effects of such singular excellencies are proportionably greater and more extensive." He further affirmed, that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent, in the same way that the prayers of the saints are prevalent in behalf of others. On this point, he declared, "that as Jesus prayed both for his friends and his enemies, while he was on earth, so he is now in heaven, a High Priest, who appears in the presence of God for us; not merely, we may believe, in the general sense of governing his church, and superintending all the affairs of our salva-

tion, but also by employing his power and favour with the Almighty Parent of the Universe, for the acceptance of our imperfect prayers and services, and more particularly for procuring peace and repentance, amidst our manifold provocations, and the pardon of our sins, when we truly forsake them." "Our Lord's intercession" (he added) "may avail to procure a respite for sinners, and further means of repentance, till all proper methods be tried for their conversion; and such benefits may be granted to them, partly out of respect to the worthiness and excellence of his character, and that heroic virtue displayed by him in his death; and, on the same account, the pardon of their sins, upon repentance. But neither his intercession nor merits were ever intended to procure pardon to obstinate and final impenitence." He was loud in his praises of human merit, and inculcated the popish doctrine of supererogation, declaring "that sinful men have often received very valuable benefits, which they had no title to on their account, not only through the instrumentality, but on account of the virtue of others." He affirmed that God "makes even the imperfect virtue which is to be found among men, a source of blessedness, not to its immediate owners only, but to others also, who are estranged from it. The happiness of its votaries he increases, by suffering their piety to overflow, to the good of all with whom they are connected, or for whom they interest themselves." "God is pleased to accept it at their hands, both on their own behalf, and in some sort too, as the price of benefits bestowed upon the undeserving." Finally, he represented the Holy Ghost, in several places of his book, as the power of God, and not as a divine person.

It certainly gives an unfavourable view of the orthodoxy of the ministers connected with the Church of Scotland, at that period, that a book containing such heretical sentiments, should have been permitted to circulate extensively in various parts of the country, for at least two or three years, without any judicial cognizance having been taken of its author, either by the presbytery or synod, of which he was



a member, or by the General Assembly of the national church. No movement was made by any of the church courts, in this matter, until the reverend author, emboldened by the impunity which he had experienced, made an open attack upon creeds and confessions. This attack was made by him, in an appendix to a sermon which he preached (in commemoration of the Revolution), upon the 5th of November 1788, and which was soon after published. In this appendix, he attacked one of his brethren in the presbytery; vilified the Seceders; treated with contempt all his opponents, and declaimed against the bondage of not being permitted to give his own heretical interpretation of the language of Scripture, unfettered by creeds. "There was a period of the christian church," he said, "when they were thought worthy of censure, who would not consent to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now we are liable to very severe censure, if we do not set aside these wholesome divine words, and substitute in their room the commandments of men; yea, submit to the dictates of every reverend upstart creed-maker, who has presumption not only to impose on us his own sense of the Scripture, and of the Confession of Faith, but to set up their unscriptural phrases as the objects of our reverence and worship." "The gravest author, it is humbly conceived, may, without impiety, and without giving just ground of offence to any christian, deride the vain and impotent attempts of human wisdom, or rather of human ignorance and pride, to express the articles of our faith in fitter words than the Holy Spirit has done."

At the meeting of the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, in April 1789, a complaint was made concerning the heretical publications of this individual; and it was overtured that the synod would take the matter into their serious consideration, and order inquiry to be made concerning the grounds of the complaint. The synod ordered the presbytery of Ayr, as the radical court, to make the necessary inquiry, and to report at next meeting of synod. Against this sentence a protest was taken, and an appeal made, to the ensuing

General Assembly, on the ground that such a sentence encroached on the independent rights of the presbytery of Ayr, as the radical court.

When the General Assembly met in the month of May, the same year, the sentence of the synod was reversed; but the reversal was coupled with a recommendation to the presbytery of Ayr, to take such steps in the matter as they might find necessary for preserving the purity of the doctrines of the church, and the authority of her standards. The presbytery, acting upon the recommendation of the Assembly, appointed a committee of inquiry, to examine and report concerning the heresies which the doctor's writings were alleged to contain. In the report which this committee presented, the doctor was charged with having inculcated, in his publications, erroneous notions on the following points:—The original and essential dignity of the Son of God; the doctrine of atonement by his sufferings and death; the priesthood and intercession of Christ: the method of reconciling sinners to God; and subscription to the Confession of Faith. To the charges in each of these articles, Dr M'Gill was required to give answers. After a variety of dissents and protests were taken, for the purpose of impeding the progress of the investigation before the presbytery, the whole business was referred to the consideration of the synod, which met at Ayr, on the 18th of April, 1790.

The following account of the proceedings which took place, in this process, before the synod of Glasgow and Ayr, is interesting; it shows the pitiable manœuvring that was adopted to shield a notorious and avowed heretic from merited censure. The account is extracted from a document published under the sanction of the provincial associate synod of Glasgow, and which was drawn up by a person of great honesty and integrity, who had good opportunities of being correctly informed concerning the particulars which he describes, many of them being witnessed by himself.

“It is confidently reported, that when the supposed friends of this prosecution came to Ayr, and had some pri-

vate meeting together, some proposed one thing, some another, but could not agree in any thing. Some proposed, upon reading the first article of the report of the committee, they should approve of it as founding a charge of heresy, and refer Dr M'Gill to the Assembly, to be censured as they should see proper; or to be formally libelled by them, if he did not give reasonable satisfaction. Others thought that the synod should approve of the committee's report, after what amendments or corrections might seem necessary, and refer to the Assembly to determine what degree of censure should be inflicted upon him for his errors. Another party, who had their measures already planned more secretly, did not as yet particularly communicate their sentiments to their brethren, but alleged that their friends in the east country had altered their mind, though it is said that some of themselves have since owned that they were misinformed.

“ When the synod met in the evening of the 13th of April, a very long time was spent in reasoning about the plan of their procedure, as whether it was regular to transmit Dr M'Gill's publications, along with other papers from the presbytery; and in what order they should begin the cause, whether with Dr M'Gill's protest against the presbytery, for referring the cause to the synod, or with the reference from the presbytery. After the reading of Dr M'Gill's general answers to the report, with the papers from the presbytery upon the cause, to be under consideration, there was a great deal of desultory reasoning; but whenever any of the speakers came to touch upon the principal object of their consideration, or the merits of the cause, they were interrupted by Dr M'Gill, or some of his friends.

“ At this time also, proposals were made by some members to appoint a committee to converse with the doctor, and so to bring about a settlement of the affair, if possible; but this was opposed by others, who alleged that they could give no proper instructions to a committee, till all papers were first read. Nor was the doctor as yet giving any evi-



dence of his desiring such a thing, while he asserted that if he was obliged to give more particular answers, he apprehended they would not be so satisfactory. It was now alleged that they had been all along out of order, and that, instead of entering on the reference from the presbytery, they should first begin with Dr M'Gill's protest and appeal, which was at last agreed to.

“ The presbytery's answers contained, so far as we recollect, very proper and temperate replies to the doctor's futile and bitter reasons of appeal. But, as it was now about midnight, a motion for adjourning was made, and agreed to; so that the parties were not heard in speeches at the bar. We are credibly informed that this was a busy time between Dr M'Gill's friends and the popular clergy, from about Glasgow. As the doctor's friends saw that the other party were powerful at this time, they insisted with him that something like concessions should be made, by which they might either be satisfied, or broken into parties.

“ When some of the two parties first met together in private, by a curious manœuvre, they looked very strange and stately together. The orthodox gentlemen talked high of deposition if the doctor did not prevent it by confession of his errors, though in a little they came down from their height to more moderate terms. As they had given no satisfactory account to their former friends of the presbytery of Ayr, about the plan of their intended operations, but had even declined it, with some marks of levity and scorn, when it was asked by one of them, on the evening of the thirteenth, we may believe that a great many members of synod had not the least apprehension of the curious turn which the affair took on the following day, till the scheme of appointing a committee to converse with the doctor was proposed. Indeed, we have been told that one of the members of the presbytery of Ayr went early, on the morning of the fourteenth, to the lodgings of one of the Glasgow gentlemen, and peremptorily insisted upon knowing what method they intended to pursue in bringing the cause to an issue; and

that, after discovering some shuffling and levity, as on the preceding evening, he told him in general their plan of conducting the business : whereupon the member of Ayr presbytery began to express particular indignation and dissatisfaction at such unfaithful and treacherous conduct. The other gentleman seemed to be little moved, and told him, that if he and his friends in Ayr presbytery saw meet to concur with him, they might do so : if not, they had sufficient strength to carry their measures without them.

“ When the synod met on Wednesday morning, before even the ordinary formality of calling parties was observed (so far as we can recollect), and what was still more material, without reading the report of the committee, a friend of the doctor’s instantly rose up, and intimated to the synod that Dr M’Gill was now disposed to make some concessions or acknowledgments for the sake of peace. The substance of what was read, or moved to the synod by this gentleman, was to the following purpose, so far as we can recollect :—That, though Dr M’Gill, in his *Practical Essay*, sincerely meant to promote the ends of truth and peace, yet now, upon farther reflection, he is disposed to acknowledge, that there are in his publications ideas which *appear* improper ; and expressions, or modes of expressions, ambiguous and unguarded. He moved that a committee should be appointed to converse with the doctor, and to draw up what might appear calculated to bring the affair to a desirable issue. When this gentleman made his overture, he did not mention in what matters the doctor was disposed to own he had used ambiguous expressions, or improper ideas ; but we are almost certain, that his language was more determinate than that contained in the *Apology*, presented to, and accepted by, the synod ; for he did not say that the doctor was only disposed to grant that there were ideas which may appear improper. Immediately after this, the doctor signified his desire that this affair should be some way accommodated. The above mentioned motion was seconded by others.

“ At this time, the synod openly avowed themselves of two opposite parties, as directly as is done in the House of Commons. Accordingly, they appointed three of the supposed friends of the doctor, and also three of the reputed orthodox from the northern boundaries of the synod, as a committee. Dr M'Gill now withdrew his protest against the presbytery, with his paper, entitled *General Answers*, and retired with the committee. It was now suspected by the discerning spectators, that this famous prosecution was to end in some pitiful farce, which soon came to be fully verified.

“ When the committee returned to the synod, about two hours after their removal, the result of their deliberations was announced by two orthodox gentlemen who were honoured to declare the glad tidings of the doctor's complying disposition. A popular preacher from Glasgow, who has had his hand very deep in this disgraceful business, and who has even got the thanks of one of the chief of Dr M'Gill's defenders at the bar of the last General Assembly, for his distinguished and exemplary moderation in this cause, had the honour of reading the doctor's introduction to his famous recantation of socinian heresy. This gentleman was so full of his subject, that he entertained the synod with a flowing speech, about the doctor's good behaviour before the committee, and his strong hopes of the acknowledgments being highly satisfactory to the synod. Immediately after him rose a doctor to read the succeeding part of the Apology. He also prefaced his part of the business with a speech of the same sort with that which went before, and endeavoured to raise the expectations of the court still higher, concerning the satisfactory nature of these acknowledgments. He had no sooner ended this task, than a number of voices were raised from different corners of the council-house, crying, *Agree, Agree*.

“ The business proceeded for a little in this manner, till a member of the presbytery of Ayr moved that they who had a particular concern in this matter should be called, or



at least have an opportunity of declaring their sentiments on the subject. Whereupon, an old serious gentleman declared, that he did not consider these acknowledgments as adequate to the offence which had been given. Another expressed his surprise that the synod should seem disposed to hurry over a business of such vast importance to the cause of truth and peace; and declared that he hoped he would have the fortitude to enter his dissent, and give his reasons for it, should he not have another to second him in the whole synod. There was not another minister nor elder, who came so far as to offer a dissent; and even he was persuaded by his brethren to abandon his design, we believe partly from an apprehension that he was supposed to have some personal animosity against the doctor in the prosecution of this business. But, if he was conscious of the contrary, he lost a noble opportunity of distinguishing himself in the cause of truth.

“ Another gentleman, of the presbytery of Ayr, would not agree to the overture being turned into an act unless some method was fallen upon to prevent the republication of the doctor's book, in its present state, which would create new disturbances. Some alleged, in case of its being republished, it should be accompanied with his concessions and acknowledgments: others alleged this would infringe upon the liberty of the press. Then it came to be asserted, that the author would expose himself to a new prosecution, should he publish his book in its present state. Upon hearing these things, the gentleman said, that he would not attempt to divide the house; but he could not agree, that the synod should call this *an unanimous decision*. So that he and the member who proposed to dissent, were the only persons who prevented the synod from having a complete triumph: as the worthy old gentleman, formerly mentioned, gave them no more opposition, than his simple declaration, that, in his opinion, the acknowledgment was not adequate to the offence given by the author of the publications referred to.” \*

\* Overture concerning Dr M'Gill's errors and process, containing a warning against said errors, and the sinful proceedings of the courts in that

It was agreed, that along with the doctor's apology and explanation, there should be published certain passages of the Confession of Faith, relative to the person and atonement of Jesus Christ. This celebrated apology was to the following effect :—" I am extremely sorry that what was honestly intended by me to serve the interests of piety, charity, and peace, should have given ground of offence to my christian brethren. My essay on the death of Jesus Christ was designed to be wholly practical. My sole object was to promote practical godliness, founded on the facts and circumstances of the gospel history ; and upon this design I was so intent, that I may, in some instances, have omitted things which I hold to be true, when the great practical use of them did not occur to me. In every work of man, more especially of some length and variety, it is not to be expected but there will be failures and blemishes which may have crept into it ; at which, however, men of judgment and candour will not be offended, when they are convinced that the design upon the whole is good." He then went over the five articles charged against him as erroneous, and gave explanations of the views which, he said, he meant to have inculcated. These explanations, though differently expressed, did not vary materially, in their meaning, from the original statements, which they were designed to explain. He concluded his apology in the following manner :—" Upon the whole, I assert, as I have formerly done more than once, that far from being inimical in any respect, I am a zealous, though weak, friend to the constitution and authority of the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, discipline, and worship, and do cordially condemn whatever appears inconsistent therewith. And considering that every minister of the Church of Scotland is bound, by very solemn engagements, to adhere to her standards, as the only authoritative interpreters of the sacred Scriptures among us, I hereby again declare, that I am sorry that my publications should have given offence to any of my

brethren, or to the world. And now, upon further reflection, I am sensible, that there are *ideas*, contained in these publications, which *may appear* improper, and *modes of expression ambiguous and unguarded*; particularly respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, the doctrine of atonement by his sufferings and death, the priesthood and intercession of Christ, the method of reconciling sinners to God, and subscription to the Confession of Faith; *all which ideas I hereby disclaim, and for all such expressions I am heartily sorry*; and hereby declare my belief of these great articles, as they are laid down in the standards of this church. I therefore entreat the reverend synod to receive this my apology, which I leave with them, and submit it to their determination, to publish these my explanations and apology to the world, if they shall think it necessary.”\*

This apology is artfully worded. There is no acknowledgment in it, on the part of the author, that he had taught pernicious error; and there is no explicit declaration, that he had renounced those erroneous notions of divine truth, to which he had given publicity in his writings. All that he admits, is, that his publications contained ideas which *might appear* improper, and *modes of expression* which were ambiguous and unguarded. These ideas he disclaims; and for these modes of expression he is sorry. He further declares his belief “of these great articles,”—to which his apology refers,—as they are laid down in the standards of the church. This he had always done. But this declaration goes for nothing, when it is remembered that the explanations, which he had given “of these great articles” were not in accordance with the views held by sound divines.

The synod were glad to get quit of a business, which, on account of the excited state of public feeling, they found it difficult to manage. No one proposed to bring the pannel to an explicit acknowledgment of his pernicious errors. No one moved, that he should have even the lowest degree of

\* A distinct and impartial account of the process for socinian heresy against William M'Gill, D.D. P. 8, &c.



censure inflicted on him,—or that he should be warned against publishing such doctrines, for the future, either from the pulpit or the press. On the contrary, they recorded the high satisfaction, which his apology had given them; and agreed to give God thanks on account of it. The following is the deliverance which they gave upon the subject: “The synod having read and considered the above explanations and apology, did, without a vote, approve of them, and receive the same as satisfactory; ordered them to be published by their clerk, and, along with them, the section of the Confession of Faith respecting the original and essential dignity of the Son of God, and also that section of the Confession which respects the atonement. Upon which Dr M’Gill declared his acquiescence in said sentence, and took instruments in the clerk’s hands. The synod, impressed with a deep sense of that harmony and concord, with which this matter has been settled, and convinced that what they have done, will, under the blessing of God, tend to promote peace and truth in this church, thought proper to appoint, and did appoint, a reverend member to give thanks unto God for the countenance and direction he had given them in this matter.”

In accordance with the latter part of this decision, first one minister, and then another, belonging to what was supposed to be the orthodox side of the house, was requested to offer up thanksgiving, on behalf of the synod, for this memorable vindication of the truth, which they had been enabled to make. But whether from a feeling of modesty, or a sense of shame, both of the ministers declined; and a suitable termination was put to this affair, by Dr M’Gill’s colleague (Dalrymple), whose sentiments were known to be nearly akin to those of his fellow-labourer, acting as the High Priest of the synod on this occasion.\*

However satisfactory this decision was to the synod, it did not give the same satisfaction to the people. Many of them indeed rejoiced on account of it: but a general feeling of disgust was produced by the conduct of the synod; and the

\* Overture concerning D M’Gill’s errors and process, &c. P. 26.

more serious portion of the community, belonging to the Established Church, felt that the cause of truth had been betrayed by those, in whom they had placed confidence. After recovering from the consternation into which they had been thrown, by the unexpected decision, a correspondence was commenced amongst individuals residing in different parts of the country, with a view to revive the process, and, if possible, to bring it to a more satisfactory issue. Accordingly, in the month of January, the following year, a formal complaint and libel against Dr M'Gill was presented to the presbytery of Ayr. The presbytery refused to receive it on the ground of some informality. From the presbytery it was carried by appeal to the synod. The synod, without giving any opinion on the merits of the appeal, lectured the people on the necessity of prudence and caution, in instituting processes against ministers; and sent the cause back to the presbytery, with instructions to proceed in it according to the rules of the church. The presbytery, "on account of the magnitude of the cause, and on account of the many difficulties attending it," would not take upon themselves the responsibility of giving judgment in the matter,—but remitted the consideration of it *simpliciter* to the General Assembly. When the Assembly met, without giving themselves any trouble to investigate the merits of the case, they declared, that the complainers had no particular right or interest in the affair, to become libellers of Dr M'Gill—because they were not of his parish; they declared farther, that the cause had been already determined. And on these grounds, they dismissed the complaint as groundless and unreasonable.

These proceedings of the Established Church courts, in throwing the shield of their protection over an individual who had been guilty of propagating the most dangerous errors, were not permitted to pass without a testimony being lifted up against them by the Secession Church. Their conduct was severely scrutinized and indignantly exposed in pamphlets penned by Seceding ministers. The Burgher Associate Synod (as we shall afterwards see) published a

“ Warning against Socinianism,” in which they pointed out the unscriptural and dangerous nature of the tenets which Dr M'Gill had so boldly advanced in his “ Practical Essay.” An overture, having the same object in view, was also introduced into the provincial associate synod of Glasgow ; and, after being carefully revised by a committee, it was published, by appointment of synod, under the title of, *An overture concerning Dr M'Gill's errors and process, containing a warning against said errors, and the sinful proceedings of the courts in that process.* This overture contains a historical detail of the proceedings connected with the process ; an exposure of the errors contained in Dr M'Gill's publications ; a condemnation of the conduct pursued by the judicatories of the national church, in tolerating such errors ; and a solemn confession of those gospel truths which had been brought into question by the proceedings that had taken place.

It is now upwards of forty years since this overture was published, under the sanction of the provincial synod of Glasgow ; and there are passages to be found in it, which, though they had been penned in the spirit of prophecy, with a view to the voluntary church question of the present day, could not have been more appropriate. They show us that the doctrine of civil establishments in religion was not much more in repute half a century ago, in at least one section of the Secession, than it is now ; and the charge brought against the present race of Seceders, that the sentiments entertained by a large portion of them, unfavourable to civil establishments, *are new*, is unfounded. In this publication we find such anti-establishment declarations as the following :— “ The ministers of the national church are not only divided about ecclesiastical management, and other questions of more doubtful disputation, but about the most fundamental articles of the revealed religion. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ has declared, that a house or kingdom divided against itself cannot stand ; and, in fact, there is properly no bond of union among them, except the civil establishment. Were this



*old rusty hoop* knocked off, they would fly into ten or twenty pieces." \* Again ; " It is more than time that the people in this country were falling upon more resolute and regular methods of having this antichristian yoke (patronage) dashed in pieces. They should resolve to let every intruder instruct his proper audience, the pews, walls, bells, and steeples, with his honourable or right honourable patron ; and they should persist in an orderly and peaceable, but firm and determined, application to parliament every year, till they get either this legal and oppressive tyranny abolished, or the public funds applied for the support of one in each parish, to whose ministrations they can with a safe conscience submit, in proportion to their real numbers ; or, what is perhaps *the only effectual way* of being quit of this cruel usurpation, *let the public fund be applied to other useful purposes, and let every one pay his own minister, as he does his lawyer or physician.*" † These statements are sufficiently plain ; and whatever opinion my readers may be inclined to form of them, they at least establish the fact, that voluntary church sentiments in the Secession are not new.

The General Associate Synod did not make any public declaration of their sentiments, in reference to the above process ; but adverted to it repeatedly in clauses introduced into their acts for public fasting ; and their language was that of deep lamentation, that the judicatories of the national church should, by their lenient measures, have given encouragement to the propagation of such dangerous errors. " Our call," they said, " is loud, to be humbled for the sins of the land in which we live. An awful flood of error hath broken in upon the land, and is threatening to overflow it. It is become fashionable with many, especially of the higher ranks, to reject and treat with contempt the whole of revealed religion. Many who profess to believe the divinity of the christian religion, openly reject its most important articles. The divinity of our Saviour, his suretiship for the elect, and the real and proper atonement made by him ; original sin,

\* P. 27.

† P. 94.

both imputed and inherent, the divinity of the Spirit, and the necessity of his power and grace for our regeneration and sanctification, are openly denied by many; and the opposite doctrines have of late been published from the pulpit and press by some, yet ministers in the Established Church. Arminianism is become the too fashionable doctrine of the day. The gospel is converted into a new law, adapted to the state of fallen men, requiring repentance and sincere obedience as the condition of pardon and eternal life; while that precious doctrine of the gospel, justification by free grace through imputed righteousness, is rejected as unreasonable and degrading to the dignity and ability of man."

## CHAPTER II.

Political excitement. Seceders and others subscribe a declaration of loyalty. Regarded by some as ensnaring. Complaint made to the Synod concerning it. Advice of Synod. Insinuations thrown out against the loyalty of Seceders. Subject brought before the Synod. Committee appointed to prepare a vindication. Political essays by Mr Young of Hawick. Their character. Popular with those in power. Pension offered to him. Pension refused. Complaint made to the Synod concerning Mr Young's essays. Committee appointed to examine them. Mr James Wat, probationer. Writes an objectionable pamphlet. Subjected to discipline. Dealings with him. Renounces his connexion with Synod. Deprived of licence, and excommunicated. Scruples concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters. Case of Messrs Thomas M'Crie and William M'Ewan. Declaratory act of the Synod on this point. Mr Bruce prepares a statement of principles respecting civil government. Statement not adopted. Missionary societies. Objected to by some. Discussions in the Synod concerning them. Overture disapproving of them. Adopted by Synod. Protest by Mr Ferrier and others. Remarks on the overture. Remonstrances and petitions against the act. Act reviewed. Explanatory statements concerning it. Case of casuistry from Ireland. Deliverance of Synod concerning it. Mission to Kentucky. Introduction of the Secession into Orkney. Makes rapid progress. Happy effects of it. Rev. William Broadfoot ordained in Kirkwall. Affecting incident. Representation concerning lay-preaching and Sabbath schools. Decision of the Synod concerning them. Complaint against decision. Decision reviewed. And amended. Dissent by Mr Muckersie and others. Letters from the missionaries in Kentucky. Presbytery of Kentucky formed.

THE period which immediately followed the breaking out of the French Revolution, was one of strong political excitement. That event produced a great moral convulsion amongst the nations of Europe. Like the heavings of a



mighty earthquake, the effects of it were felt throughout a wide extent of territory. While it levelled with the dust the ancient monarchy of France, it shook the thrones of almost all the European potentates. *Freedom* became the general watchword, on the part of the people. Kings became jealous of their subjects. A feeling of insecurity was experienced by crowned heads, and they had recourse to vigorous measures, in order to suppress the popular movements. The rulers of Britain took alarm at the progress of events. Existing institutions were considered to be in danger, and the friends of order were required to come forward and give them their support. Many responded to the call. Being desirous to acquire a reputation for loyalty, they subscribed a declaration expressive of their approbation of the British constitution, and of their determination to defend and maintain it against all who might attempt its subversion. In the lists of these subscribers, the names of Seceders were found, as well as others. Some there were who had conscientious objections against such subscriptions, as ensnaring to the people, and inconsistent with the Secession testimony; but the chief ground of objection against them was, that subscribing such declarations implied an approbation of the English hierarchy, as forming a part of the British constitution, and an acquiescence in the ecclesiastical supremacy claimed and exercised by the sovereign, as an essential branch of the royal prerogative.

This subject was brought before the General Associate Synod, at their meeting in May, 1795. A paper was laid upon their table, by the presbytery of Perth, complaining of "the snares and dangers" to which the people under their charge were exposed, in consequence of the artful methods employed to induce them to subscribe such declarations, by representing the British constitution to be the very same with the form of civil government; and calling upon the Synod to take the matter of these subscriptions into their serious consideration, and to declare more fully than they had hitherto done, the ground of their dissatisfaction with

the united British constitution ; also to show the consistency of their testimony against it, with a dutiful subjection to the present civil government, in all its lawful commands ; giving, at the same time, such directions to the people as might prevent them from being entangled in such snares.

After long deliberation upon the subject of this overture, the Synod agreed in declaring to all the people under their inspection, “ that they ought to be upon their guard against all measures tending to ensnare them into such oaths and practices as are contrary to their christian and witnessing profession.” They reminded them, that “ all oaths and declarations are to be understood, not according to any secret or reserved sense which individuals put upon them in their own mind, but according to the meaning affixed to them by those persons for whose satisfaction they are sworn and subscribed, agreeably to the common use of language in the country.” And, as there were no oaths to government but what implied an approbation of the united constitution, they therefore pronounced all declarations or subscriptions expressive of an unqualified satisfaction with government, to be unwarrantable. “ It is not,” they said, “ at all to be wondered at, though people of tender consciences should hesitate to subscribe a declaration of unqualified attachment to the British constitution, as established in King, Lords, and Commons ; while the ecclesiastical supremacy, according to that constitution, is an essential branch of the royal prerogative : nay, while the maintenance of the English hierarchy is secured by it, and archbishops and bishops of the Church of England are an essential branch of the House of Lords.” They added, “ It has been proved by the experience of nearly an hundred years, that people may have scruples at all these things, and yet be good subjects, conducting themselves in as quiet, peaceable, and orderly a manner in society, as those who are the warmest advocates for them.” In conclusion, they declared, “ that they never expressed any scruple with the form of civil government, as settled in a King, temporal Lords, and Commons ;” and they gave a strong recommen-

dation to their people, to behave themselves, as they had hitherto done, as the meek and quiet in the land. Sessions were required to "sist" all procedure against those persons who had inadvertently subscribed such unqualified declarations as above, on their signifying their acquiescence in the judgment of Synod; but those who obstinately refused to listen to the warnings of their ministers and sessions, were to be dealt with "more particularly and closely."

Insinuations unfavourable to the loyalty and the peaceable behaviour of Seceders, were at this time publicly thrown out against them. Attempts were made to injure their character, and to hold them up as objects of suspicion to the civil rulers, by representing them as disaffected to the government, and anxious for the overthrow of existing institutions. A representation was accordingly made, at the above meeting, by the provincial synod of Edinburgh, calling upon the General Synod to adopt, without delay, measures for removing such injurious and groundless aspersions. A proposal was submitted for the appointment of a committee, to prepare a statement of the principles held by the General Synod, and the other synods of the association, in reference to the civil government, and the dutiful subjection to it, which they reckoned themselves ever bound to maintain, in consistency with their solemn engagements to promote reformation; also to show, that neither the Synod nor the religious society connected with them, as such, had ever said or done any thing, in reference to the political questions which then divided the nation, or the measures which had been adopted by some for prosecuting a civil reform, that could justly expose them to the jealousy of the civil rulers, or to the obloquy of the well-affected portion of the community. This proposal was cordially adopted, and Messrs Bruce and Whytock were appointed a committee to prepare a statement on this subject, to be afterwards submitted to the consideration of the Synod.

One of the ministers belonging to the Synod stepped forward, at this crisis, as the avowed champion of the British



government. He published a political pamphlet in its defence, entitled, *Essays on Government, Revolution, &c.* The writer was Mr John Young, minister at Hawick. In the introduction, he gave the following apology for appearing in the character of a political partisan :—" He (the author) has seen, with deep concern, that, by the active part which some dissenters, both in England and Scotland, have taken in the present disputes, an odium has been brought upon the dissenting interest, in the eyes of government and its adherents, which will not be easily wiped off. By this means, he is afraid, a very strong bar is placed in the way of the legislature's granting that indulgence to protestant dissenters, which they seem disposed to extend to every other denomination of men. And he knows, that, though the principles of the Secession Church, with relation to the civil government in this nation, have been fully laid before the world fifty years ago ; and though Seceders have always given the most unequivocal proofs of their loyalty on every proper occasion, yet there never have been wanting some who attempt to traduce them as enemies to the present government : And at this time there are not a few who consider all Seceders, influenced by the peculiar sentiments of their society, as ringleaders of that party who avowedly set themselves to oppose the measures of government, to embarrass its motions, and to overturn it, if possible, from the foundation. The publication of these Essays will at least convince them that some Seceders are of a different mind." \*

Mr Young's pamphlet could not fail to be peculiarly acceptable to those who ruled the destinies of Britain at this period.† It is clearly and vigorously written, and breathes,

\* P. 3.

† In a series of letters, which appeared in 1819, in the London Philanthropic Gazette, on the subject of the proposed union betwixt the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Seceders, we find the following anecdote respecting Mr Young's publication. The writer says :—" The following anecdote respecting Mr Young's work, I had from a very reverend gentleman, still alive, and one of the brightest ornaments which adorn the national church. Soon after its publication, at a dinner given by the Lord Chancellor of England, where

from beginning to end, a spirit of high toryism. He impugns the motives, and condemns the proceedings, of those who were styled *the Friends of the People*. He ridicules the idea of common mechanics intermeddling with the affairs of government, as being above their capacity, and foreign to their pursuits; declares himself hostile to reform, on the ground that it was unnecessary, and that the advantages resulting from it would be more than counterbalanced by the disadvantages; eulogises the British constitution as the perfection of political wisdom, as a model of excellence, which it would be profane to touch with any innovating hand; inculcates submission to civil rulers, in language that savours much of the exploded doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance; and, in fine, he attempts a vindication of the ministry for involving the country in a war with France, and justifies the strong measures which they adopted for putting down sedition at home.

Owing to the strong political excitement that prevailed, the pamphlet was read with avidity, and went through several editions in the course of a few months. For the service which the writer rendered the government, by the publication of it, he was offered a pension, which he declined. But though the sentiments which the pamphlet contains were agreeable to those in power, and to that class who looked with an evil eye upon all changes, they gave offence to many; they ran counter, in most particulars, to the current opinions of the day. Mr Young was accused of having advanced doctrines inconsistent with the testimony of the church to which he belonged, and the language which he had employed in discussing the various topics of his book, was regarded as objectionable.

were present—the late Dr Moore, Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Horsley (then Bishop of Rochester), several other dignified clergymen, and the gentleman who related the circumstance to me—the conversation turned on the immense number of publications which had been produced by the French Revolution: some spoke well of one, and some of another. The Lord Chancellor said, that the best he had seen was written by a Scotch Seceder, Mr Young, in Hawick, and strongly recommended the work to the attention of the Archbishop and Bishops.”

On these grounds, a formal complaint was preferred against him at the above meeting of Synod; and a motion was made, that a committee be appointed to examine his book, to see whether the complaint was well or ill founded, so far as related to the received principles and testimony of the Secession, excluding all matter that was wholly of a political or a civil nature. This motion, after some discussion, was adopted; and Messrs Archibald Bruce, James Robertson, and John Stewart, were appointed a committee for this purpose.\* From this resolution Messrs John Buist and George Whytock dissented; and the following ministers craved to have it marked, that they had voted against the motion, as “altogether improper and unseasonable,”—Messrs George Murray, James Ramsay, John Jamieson, Alexander Moncrieff, and James Thomson.

Another pamphlet, called forth by the spirit of the times, was made the subject of synodical animadversion at this meeting. Mr James Wat, one of the Synod’s preachers, having been appointed to go on a mission to Pennsylvania, not only refused to fulfil his appointment, but wrote a pamphlet on the disputed topic of the magistrate’s power in matters of religion. This publication contained some severe strictures on the Secession Testimony, and on the conduct of the ministers and people connected with the Synod. The Testimony was charged with sanctioning intolerance and persecution, and the ministers and people were accused of inconsistency and prevarication. Mr Wat, refusing to make the necessary acknowledgments, was suspended from the exercise of his licence, as a preacher of the gospel; and the provincial synod of Glasgow was empowered, by the supreme court, to deal with him, and to bring the cause to a final decision.

The synod of Glasgow held several conferences with Mr Wat, on the subject of his pamphlet, in which they stated to him, that they did not quarrel with him on the ground

\* It does not appear that any farther procedure took place in the Synod in reference to this matter.



of his general principle, in favour of religious liberty, as they understood the very same principle to be held by the Secession Church, and to be expressly taught in the Declaration and Defence formerly published by the Associate Presbytery. They wished him to acknowledge that the consequences which he had deduced from his general principle, were not applicable to the Secession, and that the charge of inconsistency and dishonesty, which he had advanced against the members of Synod, and the people under their inspection, was without any proper foundation ; inasmuch as those phrases in the Confession of Faith, which appeared to ascribe too much power to the magistrate in matters of religion, were to be understood according to the explanation given of the Synod's principles in said Declaration and Defence. Moreover, it was stated to him, that the publication of his pamphlet, in present circumstances, was the more unseasonable, and the attack which he had made the more unjust, when an overture on the subject of the magistrate's power, having for its object the placing of this doctrine in a clearer light, had been prepared and transmitted to the several presbyteries and sessions, for their consideration.

Mr Wat's confessions not being deemed sufficiently satisfactory by the provincial synod, his case was again brought before the supreme court, at their meeting in May, 1796 ; and it was not till after considerable trouble, that they obtained from him the necessary acknowledgments, when they again restored him to the exercise of his licence. But no sooner was the sentence of restoration pronounced, than Mr Wat expressed a wish to communicate his sentiments on some other subjects. A committee was appointed to retire and to converse with him ; and after the conference was ended, Mr Wat read a paper, and lodged it with the clerk, in which he formally renounced the doctrine of the Synod concerning infant baptism, the warrantableness and use of Confessions of Faith, and the presbyterial form of church government ; and declined all future connexion with the

Synod. On receiving this document, the Synod deprived him of his licence to preach, and pronounced upon him the sentence of the lesser excommunication.

The question concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, now occupied a considerable share of the public attention. It was agitated in the church courts of the Secession, and became the topic of almost daily discussion amongst the people. The language employed in the Confession of Faith, upon this subject, was considered objectionable by many, as ascribing to the magistrate, in religious matters, a power which did not belong to him; and conscientious scruples were entertained about giving an unlimited assent to those passages where such language is employed. The following are the passages in the Confession to which these scruples were chiefly applicable:—"And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation, or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as are, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate." (Chap. xx. Sect. 4.)

"The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure

and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better affecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." (Chap. xxiii. Sect. 3.)

In the formula of questions put to probationers before receiving licence, and to ministers and elders before being ordained, the second is to the following effect :—"Do you sincerely own and believe the *whole doctrine* contained in the Confession of Faith, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with commissioners from the Church of Scotland?" &c. In giving an affirmative answer to this question, without any limiting clause, entrants into office were considered as giving a full assent to the doctrine contained in the above paragraphs, concerning the power of the magistrate to suppress blasphemies and heresies ; to prevent or reform all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline ; to call to account persons publishing erroneous opinions, and to exercise a control over the deliberations of synods.

This doctrine had been virtually rejected by the Associate Presbytery, in the "Declaration and Defence of their Principles concerning the Civil Government," which they published within a few years after the commencement of the Secession.\* In that Declaration they affirmed, that "the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, to the glory of God, is the great and *only* end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect to that office : " And that, "as in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good ; while, at the same time, their doing so must

\* In 1743 : See the account of the presbytery's controversy with Mr Nairn, vol. i.



be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienably, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges or business of the church."

Though it was not formally expressed, yet it was understood, that preachers and ministers and elders, when giving their assent to the second question of the formula, expressive of their belief in the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, did so with the above qualifying explanation concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. When candidates for the ministry expressed a wish to any of the judicatories, to know in what sense they were to understand the two doubtful paragraphs, they were uniformly told, that they were to understand them only in such a sense as corresponded with the explanation given in the presbytery's answers to Mr Nairn.

But there were some whom this verbal declaration did not satisfy. They did not wish to have even the appearance of assenting to one thing and believing another. The assent which they gave to the *whole doctrine* of the Confession, at their ordination, was given publicly in the presence of the people; whereas the explanation, as to the sense in which they understood the doctrine taught in the Confession, concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, was a transaction which took place betwixt them and the presbytery; and even though it might be known that such an explanation had been given, yet it had the appearance of inconsistency to give a formal assent to language, the meaning of which they understood in a sense so different from that which the words literally expressed. A general wish prevailed that the Synod would remove all ambiguity and all appearance of inconsistency, by giving an avowed and explicit declaration of their sentiments on this contested point.

An overture to this effect had been transmitted from the Glasgow presbytery to the General Synod, at their meeting in May, 1791; and before any definite measures were adopted on the subject, the overture was sent down to the provin-

cial synods, that the brethren might have it under consideration till next meeting. When the Synod met in the month of May, the following year, a committee was appointed to prepare an act in terms of the overture. But nothing farther was done in the matter for a considerable time afterward.

Before the committee's report was given in, a reference from the presbytery of Edinburgh brought before the Synod the case of two licentiates, who were about to be ordained, and who declared that their doubts, concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith regarding the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, were so strong, that they had not freedom to give an unlimited answer to the second question in the formula, and could not submit to ordination, unless the moderator of the presbytery was allowed, when proposing the questions of the formula to them, to intimate that they were not to be understood as giving their sentiments on that point. This, they supposed, might be done; as an overture had already been introduced into the supreme court on the subject. These two young men, whose scruples were so strong as to render a particular application to the General Synod, on their behalf, necessary, were Mr Thomas M'Crie, and Mr William M'Ewan,—the one of whom was about to be ordained at Edinburgh, and the other at Howgate.

The presbytery, being a subordinate court, did not think themselves at liberty to make any alteration in the public profession of the religious society to which they belonged; neither could they grant the dispensation, that was claimed, without introducing a precedent, which, if allowed in one particular, might have been followed in all,—and thus have frustrated the very object for which the formula of questions was proposed to candidates for the sacred office. The matter was accordingly brought before the supreme court, by reference, on the 2d of May, 1796; and a committee was appointed to consider what ought to be done for removing the difficulties of Messrs M'Crie and M'Ewan. It was con-

sidered the more necessary that something should be immediately done, as similar scruples were entertained by other young men, concerning the much contested doctrine of the power of the magistrate in religious matters. An overture on this subject had formerly been transmitted by Mr Buist, minister at Greenock. This overture was now read; and the committee were required to make it the groundwork of their deliberations, and to prepare it for the judgment of Synod.

On the next day, the committee presented the following declaratory act, which, after being read and receiving such amendments as the Synod thought necessary, was unanimously adopted:—"The Synod finding that they cannot at present enter on a particular consideration of the overture, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion,—but convinced of the urgent necessity of doing something in the meantime to obviate the scruples which young men at licence, preachers and elders at ordination, private persons at their accession and baptism of their children, have offered to the courts about the doctrine or manner of expression, used on that subject, in the Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii. sect. 3d, and chap. xx. sect. 4th.

"Declare, That as the Confession of Faith was at first received by the Church of Scotland with some exception, as to the power of the civil magistrate relative to spiritual matters, so the Synod, for the satisfaction of all who desire to know their mind on this subject, extend that exception to every thing in the Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances: That they approve of no other means of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the word in the first ages of the christian church, persuasion not force, the power of the gospel not the sword of the civil magistrate, agreeably to that most certain and important doctrine laid down in the Confession itself, chap xx. sect. 2d.



‘ God alone is the Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship ; so that to believe such doctrines, or obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience and reason also.’

“ Nor do the Synod mean the smallest reflection on the venerable compilers of the Confession, whose degrees of light on these matters, and peculiar circumstances, seem to have led them to use some expressions that have been understood by many, and may be construed as investing civil rulers with a lordship over the consciences of men, and inconsistent with the spirituality, freedom, and independence of the kingdom of Christ. And the Synod hereby renew their adherence to the doctrine on this point, in the Declaration and Defence of the Associate Presbytery’s principles concerning the present civil government, under the fourth argument from Romans xiii. 1–7, in these words:—‘ The public good of outward and common order in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect to that office ; and as in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men’s good and evil works, that they can have any inspection, so it is only over these, which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good ; while, at the same time their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far allendarly, as it is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men’s consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church ; and moreover as the whole institution and end of their office are cut out by, and lie within the compass of natural principles, it were absurd to suppose, that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof towards its end, in the foresaid circumstances, but what can be argued for, and defended from natural principles.’

“ And the Synod hereby agree, that in the second ques-

tion of the formula, after the words, ‘ as the said Confession was received and approved by an act of Assembly, 1647, Session 23,’ there shall be added, ‘ and according to the declaration of the General Associate Synod, 1796.’”

By this declaratory act the scruples of Messrs M’Crie and M’Ewan were so far removed, that they submitted to ordination.\*

Mr Bruce having prepared, agreeably to a former appointment, a statement of the principles held by the Synod, with regard to the civil government, and the duty of yielding submission to it, this statement was read to the Synod at their present meeting. After hearing it read, the Synod found that they could not enter upon such a consideration of it, as was necessary, in order to give it their official sanction. The contents of it do not appear to have been agreeable to the mind of the court ; for when a vote was taken upon the question whether they should return the overture to Mr Bruce, or recommit it, it carried by a great majority that it should be entrusted to a new committee. From this decision Mr Bruce dissented, on the ground that the Synod were losing the first and fittest opportunity of vindicating the “ Associate body” from very injurious aspersions ; and declared that he should not be considered as consenting, even by longer silence and delay, that these aspersions should remain uncontradicted.

At this meeting, the attention of the Synod was called to the subject of missionary societies, which were now forming in every part of the kingdom. While all good persons rejoiced in the zeal for the propagation of the gospel, which was now rapidly diffusing itself throughout the different sections of the christian church,—there were some who did not

\* It may be proper here to state that the sentiments of Mr (afterward Dr) M’Crie soon after this underwent a change, with regard to the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. This change he formally announced in a sermon which he preached at the opening of the General Associate Synod in 1800 ; and because the Synod continued to adhere to the sentiments expressed in the above act, he ultimately renounced (as we shall afterward see) his connexion with it.

approve of the principle on which these societies were formed. Though well affected to the benevolent object, which they were intended to accomplish, they considered them as too latitudinarian in their constitution. They objected to them on the ground of christians, whose profession was widely different, intermingling together in the most solemn acts of religious worship ; thereby nullifying, or at least neutralizing, the testimony which each sect was supposed to lift up against the errors of all the rest. They objected to them, further, on the ground, that laymen, who had not been called, or set apart, to bear rule in the church, were united along with ministers in judging of the qualifications of the missionaries, and in sending them forth to their work ; and that, in doing so, they usurped the ministerial functions,—thereby breaking down the comely order of church government, which Christ had appointed.

By an overture brought before the Synod, they were required to declare their opinion, how far it was consistent with church order, and with the testimony to which they professedly adhered, for the ministers and people belonging to the association to connect themselves with such societies. A considerable diversity of sentiment prevailed among the members of Synod on this point. After long and repeated discussions, they found that they were unable to come to an harmonious agreement upon the question. A committee was appointed to take the subject into consideration, and to prepare an act to be submitted to the Synod at their next meeting. At the meeting of Synod in October, the same year, this committee presented an overture, which they had prepared ; but the sentiments of members were as much divided as before. In the course of the discussions which ensued, the following motion was proposed, as expressive of the judgment of the Synod on this question :—“ The Synod cannot but approve of the great design of missionary societies for sending the gospel to the heathen ; firmly believing that the time is speedily approaching, when the salvation of our great and common Lord shall be known to all people ; re-



joice in, and resolve to improve, all openings of Providence to that purpose. But considering the constitution of these societies, as formed of people widely different in their religious profession and communion, not only of private christians, but of ministers acting in their official capacity ; meeting together for acts of public worship ; claiming a power in common of directing all the affairs of the mission ; and some of them exercising the power of ordination and authoritative mission also : the Synod judge that neither their own members, nor the people under their inspection, can, in a consistency with their distinguishing profession as Seceders, and without danger of falling from it, publicly co-operate with these societies in their present state." This motion was carried in opposition to another which was made,—that the Synod should delay the whole affair. Several ministers entered their protest against it, on the ground that it was an infringement of their christian liberty :\* and they declared that, while they disclaimed all approbation of promiscuous church communion, they would not be precluded from giving their countenance and support to missionary societies.

The adopting of the above motion, by the Synod, did not arise from any indifference, on the part of the members, to the great cause of missions. In the course of the preceding narrative abundant proof has been given, that this was a cause to which, as a church court, they were warmly devoted. Though they had not as yet undertaken any mission to the heathen, they had sent numerous preachers to foreign districts, where their labours were as much required as amongst the heathen. Scarcely a year passed away, during which they did not send one or more labourers to a foreign station, so that America could at this period boast of many thriving churches planted by the exertions of the Secession ;† and if

\* Mr Ferrier of Paisley took the lead in this protestation.

† A writer in the first volume of the Christian Magazine, published in 1797, bears the following testimony to the zeal and liberality, which the General Associate Synod had displayed in support of foreign missions:—"The General Synod have expended large sums of money in missions to America already. From first to last, I do not know but *fifty ministers* and

the Synod could have found a proper supply of young men, who were both able and willing to engage in missionary work, the number of these foreign churches would ere this time have been doubled or quadrupled. The expense of these missions, too, was defrayed, not by contributions gathered promiscuously from the religious public, but solely by collections made throughout the congregations belonging to the Association ;—all of whom, be it remembered, had to build their own churches, and to support their own ministers at home. Whatever opinion, then, may be entertained of the deliverance which the Synod gave concerning missionary societies, it cannot be imputed to any feeling of lukewarmness which they had with regard to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. They had given frequent and substantial proof of the deep interest which they took in the diffusion of the gospel. But they had high ideas of church order ; and it was because they conceived that this order was infringed by the constitution and proceedings of these societies, that they came to the above determination. Whether they were right or wrong in the opinion which they formed, must be left to each to judge for himself.

The Synod ordered this act to be printed, and two copies of it to be sent to each session. When circulated among the congregations, it excited a considerable feeling of disapprobation. This feeling manifested itself in petitions and remonstrances presented against it at the meeting of Synod, held in the spring of the following year. Two ministers,\* who had been absent at the preceding meeting, when the resolution was adopted, craved that their protest against it should be recorded,—which was granted. A remonstrance was presented against it by Messrs Alexander Pringle of Perth, and John Macara of Pathstruie Hill, in which they complained that the Synod had given “an unjust representation, in said deed, of missionary societies,—that the obnox-

more have gone out to that country under the patronage, and the most of these at the expense, of the Synod.”—P. 119.

\* Messrs Thomson of Mearns, and Macewan of Dundee.

ious resolution was ambiguously worded, glaringly deficient, and had been rashly adopted ;—and they craved, that the Synod would review their act, and deliberately consider what steps God in his providence was calling upon them to take, “ in a consistency with truth and present duty.”

Remonstrances, to a similar effect, were presented from the session and congregation of Huntly, from several elders and other members of the congregation of Keith, from the minister and some of the members of the congregation of London ; and a verbal communication was made from the presbytery of Elgin, stating, that they disapproved of the act, and were of opinion that it ought not to have been passed. An overture was also transmitted on the same subject from the presbytery of Perth, in which, for reasons therein assigned, they craved : —“ That the Synod express more fully, than in their late act, their hearty approbation of the great object of missionary societies for spreading the gospel, and of their zealous exertions, so far as is consistent with the word of God, in behalf of our heathen brethren perishing in gross ignorance : That they warmly recommend to all under their inspection, both ministers and people, the important duty of fervent and frequent prayer for the revival of religion in all the churches of Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom to the ends of the earth ; and that meetings for social prayer and conference be regularly observed with this view : That as the Synod judge a full co-operation with the missionary societies, as presently constituted and conducted, inconsistent with our professed principles, they should now give such particular directions as may be necessary for regulating the conduct of those under their inspection : That the Synod declare their thankfulness to God, and their unfeigned satisfaction on account of the evident increase of gospel light, especially in England : That they encourage the friends of evangelical truth to hold fast what they have attained, and to proceed in the investigation of truth and in the work of the Lord : That they express a hope, that the time is fast approaching when the watchmen of Zion’s walls shall see eye to eye, shall



sing together with the voice, and shall call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent: And, finally, that they take some steps towards opening a correspondence with the friends of truth and godliness in other denominations."

On the other hand, two representations were sent up, approving of what the Synod had done in reference to missionary societies. One of these was from some of the elders and other members of the congregation of Dundee; and the other was from the session of Kirriemuir. The session desired to be thankful, that the Lord had enabled the Synod to make a stand for his cause, and they heartily approved of the Synod's judgment, as far as it went; but they apprehended, that there was a loud call given to the Synod to explain themselves agreeably to their professed principles more fully upon the subject. They therefore entreated the Synod to take the missionary scheme again under their serious consideration, "to display their testimony more largely against it, in its complex state;" and particularly to declare, "that all co-operation with the missionary societies, while on their present footing, is inconsistent with a stedfast holding of the testimony which the Lord hath put into our hands."

These various papers being read, the subject to which they referred underwent a long discussion, which terminated in the Synod's adopting a motion explanatory of their former act. They declared, that by "*publicly co-operating with the missionary societies*," in their act of last meeting, they meant "such co-operation, and such only, as includes a joining in public acts of worship, or in the exercise of church authority with people of other denominations, and especially with ministers acting in their official capacity." At the same time, they appointed a committee to state more fully the views of the Synod respecting missionary societies. Several ministers craved, that it might be marked, that they had voted against this decision. On the other hand, Mr Ferrier withdrew his protest.

A reference from one of the presbyteries in Ireland brought

before the Synod, at this meeting, a case of casuistry, which they were required to determine. The question, which the case involved, was, Whether Seceders in Ireland could, consistently with their professed principles, take the oath of allegiance to their civil rulers, in the present circumstances of that kingdom? The oath, which they were required to take, was to the following effect :—" I, A. B. sincerely promise, and swear, and affirm, that I will be faithful, and bear true allegiance to his Majesty, King George the Third ; and that I will faithfully maintain and support the laws and constitution of this kingdom, and the succession to the throne in his Majesty's illustrious house. So help me God."

Mr Biggar, a member of the presbytery of Belfast, had taken this oath ; but in taking it, he stated to the administrator, that he took it with the following limitation, viz. that he swore to maintain the constitution of the kingdom of Ireland only in matters civil, excluding all approbation of the king's ecclesiastical supremacy, and the hierarchy of the Church of Ireland. A written attestation was given to Mr Biggar, by the person who administered the oath, that it had been given and taken with the above limitation. The presbytery craved the Synod to declare, whether it was consistent with the Secession testimony to swear such an oath, even though qualified in the manner now mentioned. This question the Synod answered in the negative. They were decided in declaring, that it was inconsistent with the testimony, which Seceders professed to maintain, to take an oath containing in it an unlimited approbation of the united constitution of church and state, even though the person swearing it should declare, that he took it with the limitation already specified : And while they expressed their sympathy with Mr Biggar as placed in circumstances peculiarly trying, they at the same time expressed their disapprobation of his conduct in this instance ; and they recommended it to all the ministers and people in Ireland, under their superintendence, to be upon their guard against being ensnared for the future. They added, " yet the Synod do not find

fault with offering professions or declarations of dutiful subjection to the civil powers on any proper occasion."

This year an application was made to the Synod, by some of the inhabitants of the state of Kentucky, to send out missionaries to that part of America. The application was favourably entertained by the Synod; and two of their preachers, Messrs Andrew Fulton and Robert Armstrong, having expressed a willingness to undertake the mission, they were appointed to be ordained, and to proceed to the place of their destination with all convenient speed. Instructions were given to them, that so soon as they should arrive in Kentucky, they should constitute themselves into a presbytery, in immediate subordination to the Synod, under the designation of "The associate presbytery of Kentucky." The presbytery of Kelso was instructed to write a letter to the brethren of the presbytery of Pennsylvania, accounting for these two brethren being missioned not in a state of subordination to that presbytery; and the presbytery of Perth, through whom the application had been made to the Synod, was appointed to write a suitable address to the inhabitants of Kentucky. To defray the expense of the mission, a collection was appointed to be made in the several congregations under the inspection of the Synod in Britain, "so as that these young men may be conveyed to the scene of their labour in such a manner as may be for the credit of religion and of the Synod." These brethren set sail for America in the end of summer, 1797. During the course of the following year, intelligence was received from Pennsylvania, expressive of the high gratification which the brethren belonging to that presbytery felt in the mission to Kentucky, and declaring their readiness to co-operate with their brethren in Kentucky, so far as circumstances might permit. The Pennsylvanian brethren also intimated, that they had it in contemplation to disjoin themselves into several presbyteries, and to erect a transatlantic Synod, maintaining the same connexion with the General Synod in Scotland, as they now did in their presbyterial capacity.

A new field of labour for the ministers of the Secession



was, at this period, opened up in the Orkney Islands. It will be difficult to point to a district in the British islands, where a faithful gospel ministry was more required ; and there is none where the labours of the Secession ministers have been crowned with more distinguished success, than in these islands of the north. Previous to the introduction of the Secession into them, the spiritual destitution of the inhabitants was great. On account of their insular situation, and on account of two or three parishes being united under the charge of one minister, and these parishes separated from one another by dangerous friths, the people, in many instances, were deprived of a regular dispensation of gospel ordinances. It was not uncommon for some of the insular parishes to be without sermon for months together, especially during the winter season.

An Oradian, in a communication inserted in one of the religious periodicals of that day,\* gives the following account of the religious state of these islands :—" While in some parts of Orkney there is very little of a gospel dispensation, in other parts of it there is no gospel dispensation at all. The parish churches have been in a ruinous state for many years ; and as ministers do not reckon themselves obliged to preach unless they are furnished with a church to preach in, the consequence is, that many of our poor Orcadians hear as little about Christ and his salvation, in the preaching of the gospel, as the inhabitants of Otaheite or Japan. I have heard that it has been pled by some of our clergy, and all who esteem and revere the sacred character as I do will be charitably disposed to put the best construction upon it, that it is the most likely way to bring the heritors to a sense of their duty, to preach none in those parishes where the churches are in ruins till they are properly repaired. I am disposed, however, to think, that if our good clergy would collect their scattered flock, and now and then give them a sermon, though delivered in the fields, or from a fishing boat, as our blessed Lord frequently did, this, I presume, would be a

\* Christian Magazine for 1797, p. 80.

more likely way to put heritors in mind of their duty, than for ministers to neglect theirs. At any rate, what a pity is it that our poor islanders, through the fault of others, should be deprived of a gospel dispensation ! If ministers and heritors, through their omission, should suffer our souls to perish, will all the produce of the valuable kelp shores of Orkney refund the loss ? But ruinous as many of our churches are, they are not all on a level with the dust. The incumbent of two parishes has generally one church in repair. Now, if field preaching is reckoned improper by our clergy, or if in our climate it is really impracticable in the winter season, might not the Sabbath be spent in public worship in the other parish, where the church is in repair ? But *the common practice in Orkney is*, that the minister preaches one Sabbath in the parish where the church is in repair, and, strange to tell ! lies perfectly idle on the next, and so leaves both his parishes totally destitute of gospel ordinances. Is this a spending or being spent for Christ ? Or, is this an imitation of the example of their great Master, who went about continually doing good ? I never was disposed to bring a railing accusation against any one, far less against the ministers of Jesus ; but I know that not a few will be applying to our Orkney clergy the saying of the prophet, ‘ His watchmen are dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving slumber ; yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough.’ ”

A few individuals in the town of Kirkwall, with the view of providing for their own spiritual wants, as well as for the wants of their neighbours, formed the design, about the year 1795, of erecting a place of worship, and making application to the Secession for a supply of sermon. The undertaking, when first proposed, was regarded by almost all who heard of it, as quixotic. The persons, with whom it originated, were few in number ; and they occupied an humble station in life. At a recent meeting of the General Assembly, the funds of the national church had been found so embarrassed, that little or no assistance could be given for erecting parish churches in Orkney ; and how could it be expected, that a few me-

chanics should succeed in an enterprise of this nature? The attempt, however, was made, and succeeded beyond expectation. Those who engaged in it received the most liberal support; and by the successful issue of the undertaking, a gratifying illustration was afforded of the sentiment, that when men cordially embark in any cause, it is difficult to say to what extent they will carry it, or with what success their labours shall finally be crowned. A place of worship was erected, and an application being made to the General Associate Synod, a regular supply of sermon was sent. The preaching of the Secession ministers excited a deep interest not only in Kirkwall, but in the neighbouring islands. Such was the eagerness of the people to hear, that every seat in the church was immediately let. About a year after the church was opened, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was dispensed in the associate congregation, for the first time, by Messrs Stuart and Bunyan, who had been sent by the Synod for this purpose. Upwards of two hundred communicants sat down at the table of the Lord; and a considerable number more were examined, who could not at the time be admitted. The ordinary place of worship could not contain a third part of the persons who were present, so that they were under the necessity of dispensing that solemn ordinance in the field. There were many present from islands, which lie at a great distance from Kirkwall. Some of these persons, though upwards of thirty years of age, had never before witnessed the celebration of the ordinance of the Supper. During the visit of Messrs Stewart and Bunyan, one of these brethren preached in the Island of Birza, and the other in the island of Shapinshay, where they had numerous and attentive audiences.

The mission of Messrs Stuart and Bunyan to Orkney was followed by an affecting incident. These two brethren, on their way home, were captured by a French privateer. The Frenchmen treated them with respect, gave them every thing that they claimed as their own, and having conveyed them within a mile of the shore, they put them and the ship's crew



into the long boat and left them. Mr Stuart, who had been, for some time, in a delicate state of health, sustained a severe shock, by the fatigues to which, in consequence of his capture, he was subjected. Soon after his return home to Falkirk (the scene of his ministerial labour), he went to Edinburgh to procure a consultation of the medical faculty. He returned home in the course of a day or two ; and had reached his own dwelling, when, as they were in the act of assisting him out of the carriage, he expired. His death was much lamented by his people ; and he left behind him the character of being a faithful and affectionate minister.

The introduction of the Secession into Orkney was productive of the happiest effects. A new impulse was given to religion amongst the inhabitants of these interesting isles. A strong desire was excited to hear the gospel preached, and serious impressions were produced in the minds of not a few. The word of the Lord had free course, and was glorified amongst them. The writer quoted above, speaking of the beneficial change which had been effected, within a short period, by the labours of the Secession preachers in that hitherto neglected region, says, “ Since this church was opened, the worship of God has been set up in different families; the voice of joy and melody is heard in different habitations where it never was heard before. Meetings for prayer and religious conversation have likewise been instituted, and are uncommonly well attended. But there is not merely the form ; I have every reason to believe, that there is more of the power of godliness displayed now, than has been for many years. There are several persons under the deepest convictions. They seem to experience all the pangs of the new birth. They are adopting from the heart the language of the jailor, and are saying, ‘ Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? ’ Others have a joy and a peace in believing. After having been in the deepest soul distress, they experience something like a heaven upon earth. There are many who are saying, that they never saw it so in Israel. May this cloud of the Spirit’s influences, which is beginning to drop down upon

us, wax greater and greater, till it cover the whole heavens.”\*

In the spring of 1798, the associate congregation of Kirkwall gave a unanimous call to Mr William Broadfoot, who was ordained amongst them on the third of August, the same year. The ordination took place in the open air; as the church, which had been so lately erected, having already been found too small for the accommodation of the hearers, had been taken down for the purpose of being enlarged. So rapid had been the increase of the congregation, that at the period of Mr Broadfoot's ordination, the number of members amounted to five hundred.

As there were many, throughout the Orkney Islands, who had not been taught to read, nor instructed in the principles of the oracles of God, it was considered expedient to employ a catechist, who should read the Scriptures, and communicate religious instruction, in a familiar manner, to these illiterate persons. Mr Magnus Anderson, a member of the Kirkwall congregation, who had for some time been travelling, of his own accord, among the islands, reading and catechising, came to Edinburgh, and expressed a desire to the associate presbytery (under whose superintendence the congregation had been placed by the General Associate Synod), to be employed by them as a catechist, if they should find him qualified. The presbytery, having examined him as to his acquaintance with the principles and power of religion, agreed that he should act as a catechist under their inspection; and gave him instructions as to his plan of operation. They also agreed to give him, for the first year, a salary of twenty pounds; and afterwards to increase it, if it should be thought necessary.

In no part of the British dominions has the Secession prospered more than in Orkney. It has planted congregations in almost all the islands; and exercised an influence peculiarly favourable to the moral and religious improvement of the islanders. Sabbath schools, prayer meetings, and as-

\* Christian Magazine for 1797, p. 82.

sociations for religious purposes have been instituted ; and the people are enjoying the benefits of a gospel ministry in many districts, where the benefits of such an institution were not previously enjoyed. The zeal and activity displayed by the Orcadian Seceders, both ministers and people, have been highly praise-worthy. In spite of the opposing influence exerted by those, who were unfriendly to the progress of dissent, and in spite of the disadvantages connected with a thinly scattered, and for the most part poor, population, they have succeeded in establishing, by their own voluntary efforts, aided by the fostering care of the church courts, a regularly organized congregation, or a preaching station, in almost every accessible spot. The parent stock, planted in Kirkwall, in the circumstances above described, has increased and ramified to such an extent, that instead of one congregation, in connexion with the Secession, there is now a respectable presbytery in Orkney, consisting of ten congregations, besides some missionary stations.

In May 1798, a representation was laid before the General Associate Synod, by the presbytery of Aberdeen, concerning lay-preaching, and Sabbath evening schools. It was stated, that a great ferment prevailed among the congregations within their bounds, on these subjects ; that some of the people highly approved of them, while others were keenly opposed to them. Those who attended upon the ministrations of the lay-preachers, that occasionally itinerated amongst them, were considered as acting inconsistently with their professed principles ; and connected with the conducting of Sabbath evening schools, there were certain irregularities which gave offence ; such as the singing of hymns, promiscuous communion, and permitting crowds of full grown persons to be present, to listen to the addresses ; which was regarded as a species of lay-preaching. The presbytery craved that the Synod would give authoritative directions to the people on these controverted points. A committee having been appointed to take the matter into consideration, an overture was prepared by them, and sanctioned by the Synod,



to the following effect :—The Synod unanimously declared, that as lay-preaching has no warrant from the word of God, and as they had always considered it their duty to testify against promiscuous communion, no person under the inspection of the Synod could consistently with their principles attend upon, or give any countenance to public preaching by any who were not of their communion ; and should they do so, they ought to be subjected to the discipline of the church. With regard to Sabbath evening schools, while the Synod did not absolutely condemn them, but admitted that they might be the means of doing good to the young, if they were under proper regulations, yet they judged that no person under their inspection could, consistently with their principles, send their children to such schools, or otherwise give them any countenance, if discourses were delivered in them tending to encroach upon the work of the ministry ; if other persons were permitted to be present, besides the children to be instructed ; if hymns of human composure were sung in them ; if any thing was done or taught in them, inconsistent with the duties of the Sabbath-day ; if attendance upon these schools should interfere with the duty of parental instruction at home ; or if the minister and session under whose inspection they were, should not be satisfied with the character and principles of the persons who taught in the schools.

This declaration of the Synod did not give satisfaction to all the parties concerned. At the meeting of the Synod, in May the following year, the subject was again brought before them, in the shape of a representation from some of the sessions in the north, complaining of the convulsed state of their congregations. A petition also was presented from the congregation of Keith, and from several individuals connected with the teaching of Sabbath evening schools : And the Synod were obliged to review and amend their former act. The amendments, however, were chiefly verbal ; the spirit of the act remained the same. Instead of declaring that no person could consistently with their principles attend upon the ministrations of any one, who did not be-

long to their communion, it was declared that no person could consistently give countenance to the public ministrations of any one bearing office in a church, against which the Synod lifted up a testimony. Some members proposed, that the declaration should be qualified by introducing the phrase, "in ordinary circumstances." This was rejected, and Messrs Muckersie, Ferrier, Culbertson, and John Mitchell, entered their dissent, on the ground of this clause being rejected, and for other reasons afterwards to be assigned.

During this summer (1799), intelligence of a gratifying kind was received from the two missionaries, Messrs Armstrong and Fulton, who had been sent to Kentucky, in 1797. They arrived in that province in the month of March 1798; and, though they had considerable difficulties to encounter at first, and appear to have been discouraged by the general state of the country, yet a great and an effectual door was speedily opened unto them. More applications were made to them for sermon than they were able to answer. As soon as circumstances permitted, after their arrival, they constituted themselves into a presbytery. This took place at Canerun, on the 28th of November 1798. The following account of the early difficulties and prospects of this mission, extracted from the letters of these individuals, cannot fail to be interesting:—

"We set sail (says Mr Armstrong, in a letter dated 5th December 1798), from Pittsburgh for Kentucky, on the 21st February 1798; and, after a passage of nine days, arrived at Limestone, on the 1st of March. Limestone is 500 miles from Pittsburgh. The weather was, for the most part, cold and stormy, and our accommodation in the boat very indifferent. It was so much crowded with horses, baggage, and merchant goods, that there was scarcely any place in it where we could stretch ourselves to sleep; and, except a part of two nights, when we stopped the boat, and went ashore to a house, I slept little, and never pulled off my clothes. On one occasion, the darkness of the night rendering it dangerous to continue sailing, we fastened our boat to the bank of

the river, and Mr Fulton and I went in search of a house to lodge in. After traversing the woods of what is called the Indian shore, on the right hand side of the Ohio river, going down for a considerable time, we found that our search was in vain ; for no habitation could be seen. There was a good deal of snow on the ground : we could not sleep on board, and we wanted rest somewhere. The only shift which now remained was to cut up logs for a fire. Three of us, Mr Fulton, another young man, and myself, went to work, and kindled a fire as well as we could. I then chose a place to lie upon ; and, after scraping away the snow, and cutting up a piece of log for a pillow, I wrapped myself in a blanket, and lay down to sleep. When we had rested thus for about two hours, a great fall of wet snow obliged us to decamp, and again remove to the boat.

“ When we set sail at first, the river was low, and our vessel grounded, sometimes on shallows, sometimes on rocks ; then all hands (myself only excepted), were obliged to assist, and jumping into the river, while the water reached to their loins, to force her off with long poles. Such a situation was not, in a cold frosty night, you may judge, very tolerable. There were only six men on board, which made it necessary for Mr Fulton and me to take our full share of watching and rowing ; this, as we generally sailed night and day, was labour sufficient.

“ A severe cold, contracted very suddenly at Pittsburgh, threw me into a slight fever, from which I had not fully recovered, when we set sail down the river ; and this circumstance, through the kindness of the owner of the boat, procured for me the indulgence mentioned above ; yet I got perfectly well during the passage, and landed at Limestone, free from any bodily complaint whatever, except that I felt wearied and sleepy.

“ We staid ten days near Limestone, in the house of Alexander Hamilton, an old Scotch seceder, from Haddington. We were yet seventy miles from the place of our destination, and wanted horses to carry us along. There is



scarcely any such thing as horses to hire in this country ; and, owing to the deepness of the roads, in some seasons, it is almost impossible to travel on foot. But here, as in every thing else, we experienced the kindness of Providence, and were agreeably extricated from this difficulty ; for Mr Hamilton gave us one horse, and a Roman catholic, to whom we were introduced, gave us another for upwards of fifty miles ; and, at the same time, a letter of introduction to a gentleman of the baptist persuasion, with whom he was connected. From this gentleman's house we sent back our horses ; and he showed his kindness by detaining us with him as long as he could, and then gave us horses to Canerun, where Mr Goodlet resides.

“ We had now finished our journey ; but our difficulties seemed only to begin : for, besides other discouraging circumstances, which it is not necessary to rehearse at present, as we hope they are in a great measure at an end, we scarcely knew of any in all this western part of the world, to take us by the hand, or submit to our ministry. At first I regretted that one of us had not remained in Pennsylvania, where there was great need for him. But God, who often, for the accomplishment of his own gracious designs, works by such means, and in such a manner, as short-sighted mortals cannot understand, disappointed our fears ; and we were soon convinced that the General Associate Synod has been directed to the most proper measure in sending out two ministers. The hand of God, in this matter, was seen and acknowledged in different parts of the country : for, though our beginnings were small, a great door has been opened here for the preaching of the gospel ; and there are petitions for sermon, which it is impossible for us to answer, to the satisfaction of the people ; and, though the people that submitted to our ministry at first, if they had all resided in our settlement, would have made but a small congregation, there is now every reason to think that those under our inspection would afford sufficient work for four ministers ; two in Kentucky, and two in the state of Tennessee, which lies on the south-

west of Kentucky. But it is necessary for me, in some measure, to account for this much unexpected change in our situation.

“ With respect to Kentucky, our connexions were scattered at a considerable distance from one another, in different parts of the state ; of consequence, they were anxious to have sermon, at least occasionally, as near themselves as possible. Our preaching among them excited the attention of their neighbours in the different places, and many of them having heard, joined themselves unto us ; and people have expressed their desire of being taken under our inspection, where at first neither our friends nor we had the smallest thought of such an event. One of our congregations is on the south side of the Kentucky river, in Shelby, and the adjacent country, near the falls of Ohio. The other is near Lexington. Each of these will form a charge sufficiently extensive for the labours of one pastor, and able to support him, so as to enable him to give himself wholly to the work of the ministry ; and however negligent the members of some other societies may often be, in supporting their ministers, the people connected with us, I believe, will not be deficient, in this respect, according to their ability.

“ With respect to the state of Tennessee, what was said above is likewise applicable to it. A person was sent to us by some people in Cumberland county, in that state, desiring that one of us should visit them. Accordingly, Mr Fulton set out for that place in the month of June last ; and, after remaining six or seven weeks, left them in as favourable a situation as could have been expected. During his stay, several expressed their desire of being admitted to communion with us, and he conversed with them, with this view, much to his satisfaction. This place is distant about two hundred miles from Lexington.

“ Several people in Blount county, in another part of the state of Tennessee, had for a long time been petitioning the presbytery of Pennsylvania for supply of sermon, but without success. As soon as our arrival in Kentucky was known

among them, they sent off a commissioner with a petition, entreating that one of us should visit them also. As the circumstances were clamant, after detaining the man for a week or ten days, in order to make the necessary arrangements before my journey, I set out with him to Blount county. The distance is about 230 miles from Canerun, where I now write, and about 200 miles from Cumberland county, mentioned above. During the time of my residence among them, which was seven weeks, after conversing with a considerable number, they were constituted into a congregation, and five elders ordained among them. I there baptized thirty-two children in one day. About fifty families are either in full communion, or are considered as steady adherents, and are anxious for a minister. There can be no doubt of a minister's being comfortable there; and I believe he would not be long settled, ere he had occasion for an assistant in some of the neighbouring counties." \*

In a letter written by Mr Armstrong (dated 5th June 1799), giving an account of the prospects that were beginning to open upon the mission, after they had time to examine the state of the country, and complete their arrangements, he says,—“ Mr Fulton and I have got the bounds of our habitation fixed. This was an extremely delicate business, but it has been effected apparently to the satisfaction of all parties. The nearest boundary of Mr Fulton's congregation is forty, and the most distant at least seventy miles from the place of my residence, which is eight miles from Lexington. My congregation is near the centre of the country, in one of the most fertile, thickest settled, and best cultivated parts of Kentucky, and where society is most improved. I have three places for public worship, each of which, by contract, is entitled to one-third of my public labours. Two of the three places where I preach, are eight miles apart, and the third is fifteen miles distant from each of the others. Two of these are sufficiently able to maintain me ;

\* Christian Magazine for 1799. Pp. 187, 188.



the third could neither support a minister, nor obtain one if they could support him. \* \* \*

“ Considering the very discouraging prospect which, a little more than a year ago, presented itself to us in this country, we have abundant reason for gratitude and thanksgiving to God, who has so much disappointed our fears, and to such a degree made our way prosperous. Taking into account the infant state of this congregation, with which I am connected, the number of members belonging to it is considerable: several of them are men respectable for their situation in the world, as well as for their talents and piety. Several members of session are such as would fill that office with credit in any congregation in Britain,—a circumstance which gives me particular satisfaction; yet, till now, I never knew so well the labours, the disquietude, the vexation, and the grief attending the work of the ministry. For, though there are several sensible and religious people in my congregation, the stupid ignorance of some who put themselves under my inspection, and the careless indifference, or hardened insensibility of others, render it necessary for me to be instant ‘in season and out of season.’ While, on such occasions, I have endeavoured to impress the minds of individuals or families with a sense of the necessity and importance of religion, and of a due attention to the duties which belong to the christian character, I have been left to weep over the insensibility of some who seemed to be callous against all convictions, and hardened in their disregard to the things of God, though they attend the public ordinances of the gospel; upon others, it is thought, some apparent impression has been made. \* \* \*

“ The planting of churches is difficult and laborious work. The exercise of the ministerial office here, would require, at the same time, invincible resolution, yet prudence, unwearied industry, and zealous activity in the service of Christ, with a disposition to become all things to all men, and a calmness of temper, which can scarcely be ruffled. But who is sufficient for these things? For my own part, I am far, very

far, from having great pretensions to these qualities. I have been sometimes obliged to put on a brow of brass, in my public ministrations, to 'rebuke and exhort with all authority,' and have succeeded so far, that the openly profane, who despise religion, are either driven away from our assemblies, or forced to behave in them with tolerable decency. It is a disagreeable situation for a minister to be under the necessity of addressing himself to an assembly, the greater part of which consists of declared infidels. In this situation, however, I have sometimes found myself placed. On such occasions, my fortitude has never forsaken me in so great a degree as I feared. What we have already been enabled to go through, and the countenance we have already received, affords us great reason to 'thank God, and take courage.' But, notwithstanding of all that I have said, I sincerely declare to you that I do not repent my acceptance of a mission to Kentucky. I entertain no fears with regard to temporal support, and I have the prospect of being much more useful in promoting the general interests of the kingdom of Christ here, than I could have been in Scotland.

"We have two vacancies in the state of Tennessee. One of them I have not seen; the other, on several accounts, promises to be a charge perhaps more eligible than any under our inspection. Indeed, Mr Fulton and I have taken those stations which appeared to be the most difficult, the most precarious, and the most liable to be injured by the want of ministers; leaving the rest, as better established, to depend upon our supplies, and to wait the arrival of other ministers. I mentioned my journey to Tennessee, in the letter already referred to; and, that you may understand my mode of journeying through the wilderness between this place and Tennessee, take the following account of it. Besides the ordinary necessities for travelling with you, I first take care to provide me in a large wallet, one end of which contains provision for myself, the other for my horse: then I get what is here called an Indian blanket, the use of which I shall describe by and by; both of these are fixed on the

horse along with the saddle-bags. Some of your nice high-minded Scotch ministers will now be ready to exclaim, 'What! travel in this mean plight! expose the gospel to contempt!' But stay a little. This is done by all classes of men in such a situation; and what is common, does not detract from any man's dignity. Well, but to proceed on my journey. You must now suppose me equipped as above, and moving along till I find a spring or a brook, when it is necessary to rest a little. Here, after my horse has begun feeding, I sit down under a tree, and finish my repast out of the wallet. Then I fix every thing, and remove. Having thus refreshed myself, at proper intervals, I come to a mean log cabin in the evening, where again I eat my supper out of the wallet. But there is no bed which I choose to occupy. I therefore throw my saddle-bags on the floor for a pillow; and, wrapping myself in the Indian blanket, I lie down to sleep with my feet to a great fire (if it is cold). Sometimes I get a bear's skin under me, and sometimes not. In this manner, I move on from Monday morning till Saturday night, for upwards of 200 miles, when I come to the end of my journey; all the while, though out, sometimes in snow, and sometimes in rain, I feel myself as hearty and well as ever I did in my life, and exposed to less danger of catching cold, than if I had reposed every night upon a bed of down.

"Three members of the congregation, about eighteen or twenty miles distant from Knoxville, the seat of government in Tennessee, who, at midnight, heard of my arrival there, on the evening of the preceding day, came to meet me in the morning; and I was not a little affected when the honest men told me, with tears, that, for more than ten years, they had been waiting and praying for such a day. A reception of this sort was surely the best encouragement I could have met with. In Blount county, the profession of religion is general. I heard no account of any open infidels. Here, there was no occasion to reprove my audience for their inattention or improper behaviour in the time of public worship.



Here, too, I found several persons who had never before seen or heard a minister of our communion, whose religious principles were the same with mine. They had separated from the presbyterian congregation in this place, because they could approve neither of the doctrine taught, nor of the mode of worship in that congregation. They joined themselves in praying societies, with some who had formerly been acquainted with the principles of the Secession; and, along with them, waited for a minister, from whom they could receive the ordinances of the gospel. An extensive field for the propagation of the gospel presents itself in this country; and I feel anxious, extremely anxious, that if possible, a minister could be got for Tennessee." \*

\* Christian Magazine for 1799. Pp. 559-562.

### CHAPTER III.

Mr William Hume sent to Kentucky. Great religious excitement in Kentucky. Different opinions concerning it. Presbytery of the Carolinas formed. Communications from Nova Scotia. Urgent request for more missionaries. Messrs Francis Pringle, Alexander Dick, and Thomas M'Culloch missioned. Energy and zeal of Mr M'Culloch. Pictou College founded. Mr M'Culloch appointed president. Regulations of Synod respecting students of divinity. Regulations respecting the benevolent fund. Regulations respecting the support of a gospel ministry. Regulations respecting the appointments of preachers. Renewing of the covenants in 1805 by ministers and others. Engagement to duties. Proposal for a union betwixt the Burgher and Antiburgher parties in Ireland. Letter from the Burgher Synod in Ireland to their Antiburgher brethren. Terms of coalescence. Discussed in the Irish Provincial Synod. Not approved of. Union postponed.

WITH the view of reinforcing the mission in Kentucky, the Synod appointed Mr James Sinclair and Mr William Hume to proceed to that destination. It was deemed proper afterward to release Mr Sinclair from this appointment, in consequence of a call which he received from a congregation in Stronsay. As the claims of the Orkney Islands, in a religious point of view, were urgent, the Synod yielded to the prayer of the people of Stronsay, and Mr Sinclair was settled amongst them. Mr Hume received ordination from the presbytery of Kirkaldy, on the 5th of February, 1800, and arrived in Kentucky in the beginning of the following year. His arrival occasioned great joy to the brethren in that remote quarter, and to their people. After being employed, for a short period, preaching within the bounds of their congregations, he was sent to the state of Tennessee, to preach

at Nashville, in Cumberland county, where he laboured for two months ; and then to Blount county, about two hundred miles distant from Nashville, where he continued other two months. In the month of August, 1801, a call was presented to him from each of these places. Mr Hume, being urged by the presbytery to make a choice, reluctantly gave the preference to Nashville ; expressing, at the same time, his willingness to go to either of the places, or to labour at them by turns, till both could be provided with a minister. The presbytery thought that it would be hurtful to both congregations to keep them in suspense ; and Messrs Armstrong and Fulton met him at Nashville, and admitted him pastor of that congregation, on the 2d of December, 1801.

At the period of Mr Hume's arrival in Kentucky, that country was the scene of a singular religious movement, similar to what had taken place at Cambuslang, and in other parts of the west of Scotland, as described in a former part of this work ; and good men in America were no less divided in opinion concerning the nature of it, than those in Scotland had formerly been concerning the " Cambuslang work." Some regarded it as an extraordinary work of the Spirit ; others regarded it as a work of the devil, intended to delude the souls of men. The effects produced were certainly uncommon, and though there might be (as there is in almost all cases of the kind) much false excitement, yet there is reason to believe that much spiritual good was done. The following account, extracted from a letter sent home by one of the Synod's missionaries in Kentucky, will convey some idea of the nature of the work. It may be premised, that both friends and foes agreed in giving the same statement of facts, though the conclusions which they deduced from them were widely different. Such extraordinary movements as the one here described, have generally been regarded with suspicion by the Seceders, from the period of the " Cambuslang work," downward ; and it would appear, from the extract here inserted, that the members of the presbytery of Kentucky did not form an exception to the general rule.



The letter is dated 5th March, 1802, and the writer says :—

“ Last summer there appeared among the presbyterians a work still more astonishing, which drew away the attention from the baptists, except their own connexions. This work seems to be of the same complexion with that which took place long ago at Cambuslang, in the west of Scotland, although differing, perhaps, in some particulars. It first made its appearance in the lower parts of this state, towards Cumberland, one hundred and fifty miles from this, about a year and a half ago. The news of an extraordinary revival of religion were spread over all this part of the country. It was much extolled by some, and a general expectation was formed, that the same would take place here ; which accordingly was the case. It began, as I have been informed, in the congregation of a Mr Stone, in the county of Bourbon, among some of his people, met in a praying society. Afterwards, at public worship, a kind of weakness and fainting came upon a number of them, and some of them fell down, which raised a considerable agitation among his people. This happened some short time before his sacrament. He sent word to some of the neighbouring ministers to come and see, and judge of a work he could not fully understand. A number of ministers went to assist at the sacrament. The report of it spread with rapidity ; a great number of people collected, and a good many of them were taken with these fainting fits. This was, if I recollect right, in the month of May last. Some of the ministers were said at first to be opposed to it, and wanted to discourage it ; but after a little some of themselves were affected, and all of them, as far as I know, came by degrees to view it as a divine work.

“ Other sacraments, in a few weeks, succeeded. The number of people that attended on these occasions increased, and the same ferment and fainting continued, till the months of July and August, when the collection of people at these sacraments was prodigious. At one of them, some supposed there were ten, others fifteen thousand. Such a number of

people could not get lodging within any reasonable distance. Many, therefore, brought waggons and provisions along with them, and continued on the ground till all was over. These meetings began on the Friday, and sometimes they were not all dismissed till the Tuesday after. Some fell upon the fast-day (Friday), and on Saturday; but on the afternoon of Sabbath and Monday, the stir was greatest. It is said, that once or twice, upon the Monday, the people were in such an agitation, that the minister did not preach. Some were struck all at once, and fell down; others felt a weakness coming on, and sat down; others, when they felt themselves affected, attempted to leave the meeting, but had not gone far till they were obliged to yield. When one fell in the meeting, they carried him a little way off; a crowd collected around; one was employed in prayer,—a minister if at hand, if not, any that pleased. If none were engaged in prayer or exhortation, the people that surrounded the one that was down, were singing hymns. When these exercises were going on, particularly in time of singing, others were struck down, which occasioned the formation of new parties. It is said, that upwards of one hundred have been down at once. All kinds of persons have been affected, men, women, and children, professors of religion, and many who made no profession; even some deists, who went for their amusement, were struck down. One in particular, after he was recovered, acknowledged the wickedness of his former life, and exhorted others to repent of their sins, and to regard religion. Many others exhorted, in like manner, with uncommon eloquence. Children of ten or twelve years of age have fainted, and afterwards harangued about religion in a surprising manner. I suppose it is generally the case, that when the mind is much agitated, from whatever cause, words flow more copiously than usual, but often very incoherently.

“ I am of opinion, that such an irregular, and, so far as I can judge, unscriptural manner of worshipping God, in public ordinances, ought neither to be encouraged nor countenanced. It has indeed been said, that this certainly is a

work of the Spirit of God ; for a visible reformation has taken place with many that have fallen. That some external reformation has taken place with many of them, I make no doubt, and perhaps some may be internally renewed. God may have taken occasion, from this great stir about religion, to make some careless sinners think seriously about their immortal souls, and may have, in a sovereign manner, communicated his grace. But it appears to me, that the tendency of this work, upon the whole, is to entangle poor souls in delusion about their eternal concerns, and to lead them away from the Scriptures, to make them slight a regular dispensation of ordinances, and look for extraordinary impulses of the Spirit without the word."

In reference to the congregations belonging to the presbytery of Kentucky, in connexion with the General Associate Synod, the writer adds :—" Nothing of this kind has taken place amongst our people. We had the sacrament of the Supper dispensed last summer at Baregrass. On the fast-day before, a young man in the neighbourhood, who sometimes before attended our meeting, fainted in time of sermon, which occasioned some little disturbance ; but the people carried him out of the meeting-house. He remained till sermon was over, and Mr Armstrong conversed with him as to the cause of his trouble, but received no satisfaction. We are told he had frequently before this fallen down at the presbyterian meetings above mentioned ; but he has never attended our sermons since." \*

Another writer, not connected with the presbytery of Kentucky, giving an account of these scenes, speaks more decidedly, and in more favourable terms, concerning the spiritual effects produced by them. Having been present at several of the meetings, he states the result of his own observations :—" In October," he says, " I attended three sacraments : at each there were supposed to be four or five thousand people, and every thing was conducted with strict propriety. When persons fell, those who were near took

\* Letter from Kentucky, in *Christian Magazine*, vol. vii. p. 38, 39.



care of them, and every thing continued quiet until the worship was concluded.

“ At Cane Ridge sacrament, it is generally supposed that not less than one thousand persons fell prostrate to the ground, among whom were many infidels. At one sacrament which I attended, the number that fell was thought to be more than three hundred. Persons who fall are generally such as had manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour.

“ Immediately before they became totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor, and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Persons in this situation are affected in different degrees ; sometimes, when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands, and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases they are unable to speak, the pulse becomes weak, and they draw a difficult breath about once in a minute ; in some instances, their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life, forsake them for nearly an hour. Persons who have been in this situation, have uniformly avowed that they felt no bodily pain ; that they had the entire use of their reason and reflection ; and, when recovered, they could relate every thing that had been said or done near them, or which could possibly fall within their observation. From this it appears that their falling is neither common fainting, nor a nervous affection. Indeed, this strange phenomenon appears to have taken every possible turn to baffle the conjectures of those who are not willing to consider it as a supernatural work. Persons have sometimes fallen on their way from public worship, and sometimes after they had arrived at home, and, in some cases, when they were pursuing their common business on their farms, or when they retired for secret devotion. It was before observed, that persons are seriously affected, for some time previous to their falling ; in many cases, however, it is otherwise. Numbers of thoughtless sinners have

fallen as suddenly as if struck with lightning. Many professed infidels, and other vicious characters, have been arrested in this way, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work.

“At the beginning of the revival in Shelby county, the appearances, as related to me by eye-witnesses, were very surprising indeed. The revival had, before this, spread with irresistible power through the adjacent counties; and many of the pious had attended distant sacraments with great benefit. These were much engaged, and felt unusual freedom in their addresses at the throne of grace, for the outpouring of the divine Spirit at the approaching sacrament in Shelby. The sacrament came on in September. The people, as usual, met on Friday; but all were languid, and the exercises went on heavily. On Saturday and Sunday morning, it was no better: at length the communion service commenced; every thing was still lifeless. Whilst the minister of the place was speaking at one of the tables, without any unusual animation, suddenly there were several shrieks from different parts of the assembly; instantly persons fell in every direction; the feelings of the pious were suddenly revived, and the work progressed with extraordinary power, till the conclusion of the solemnity. This phenomenon of falling is common to all ages, sexes, and characters; and, when they fall, they are differently exercised. Some pious people have fallen, under a sense of ingratitude and hardness of heart; and others, under affecting manifestations of the love and goodness of God. Many thoughtless persons, under legal convictions, have obtained comfort before they arose. But perhaps the most numerous class consists of those who fall under distressing views of their guilt, who arise with the same fearful apprehensions, and continue in that state for some days, perhaps weeks, before they receive comfort.” \*

It will be seen, from one of the letters quoted above, that the brethren in Kentucky did not approve of such proceed-

\* Letter in the Evangelical Magazine, vol. x.

ings as those now narrated ; instead of encouraging them, they rather checked any tendency to them in their congregations. They considered them as originating in a false excitement, and as fitted to bring discredit upon religion, by the extravagances connected with them. Though, however, no such scenes took place among their flocks, they were most laborious and faithful in preaching the gospel, throughout a wide extent of territory. Under their ministerial labours, their people grew in intelligence and piety ; and if the Synod could only have found a sufficient number of fellow-labourers, who were able and willing to undertake the work, soon would these western wildernesses have been made to blossom as the rose.

During the winter of 1802, Mr Armstrong crossed to the western side of the Ohio, and preached for some time in what was called the North Western territory, now the state of Ohio. The gospel thus penetrated far into the west, in connexion with the Secession. Two ministers in Carolina, belonging to the Associate Reformed Synod, along with their congregations, joined the Associate Synod of America ; and these, together with Mr Cree, in Virginia, were at this period formed into a presbytery, under the designation of the Associate Presbytery of the Carolinas. In connexion with the Synod, there were, within the limits of the states, no fewer than twenty vacant congregations, almost all of which were capable of maintaining ministers in a comfortable condition. Some of them were highly respectable, in regard both to the number and character of their members. A few preachers were licensed by the presbyteries in America ; but they were by no means sufficient to supply the wants of the church in that quarter ; and urgent applications were made to the Synod at home.\*

\* It is worthy of being noted, as an instance of presbyterian zeal, in the performance of ministerial duty, that Mr Hume of Nashville, in attending the meetings of his synod at Philadelphia, had to accomplish a journey (going and returning) of *two thousand miles* : He and his brethren in the presbytery undertook this long journey by turns ; those who remained at home, supplied the pulpit of the brother who was absent on synodical duty.



Along with the communications from Kentucky, a letter was, at the same time, received from the brethren in Nova Scotia, giving an account of the state of matters in that quarter, and requesting, in strong terms, that the Synod would send them a supply of preachers, as the fields around them were white for the harvest, and the labourers few in number. There were many in that region, who had long been without a dispensation of the gospel, and some of the young generation had never heard the joyful sound. The people had their eyes fixed on Scotland, as the quarter from whence they expected this inestimable boon to reach them ; and some of them had been waiting, for a number of years, expecting a favourable answer to petitions which they had formerly sent.

The brethren who occupied this outpost of the Secession Church, in connexion with the General Associate Synod, were Messrs Macgregor, Ross, and Brown ; and the following extracts from their address will show the sad religious destitution of the settlements in their neighbourhood, and the earnest desire of the inhabitants to enjoy the benefits of a gospel ministry.

“ There are many people in this and the neighbouring provinces, who are now, and have for a long time been, without the gospel. Many of the young generation have never heard its joyful sound. There are many infant settlements so weak, that they cannot support a fixed dispensation thereof, who earnestly desire occasional supplies ; many others are able and willing, but all their endeavours to obtain it have hitherto been in vain. You have some young men under your inspection, who might come over and preach to some of these people ; and sure it is their duty to come. It is a most grievous thing to think of their perishing for lack of knowledge, while there is a possibility of giving them the means of knowledge. Every one ought to pity and help them to the utmost. We do what we can, but our labours cannot be much felt in such an extensive circle. There is a necessity for more hands to be employed in the work.

“ It is about ten years since the people of Amherst sent you a petition for a minister. The subscribers were not numerous, but they were mostly men of sense and piety. It was the superior confidence they placed in you, that induced them to apply to you ; and every year since, they expected an answer, though their hopes grew fainter the longer they waited. They gave a call to Mr Brown, soon after his arrival in this province ; and had he been left to his own choice, there is little reason to doubt that he would have preferred them to the people among whom the presbytery appointed him, though he was not dissatisfied with their appointment. Delay and disappointment discouraged them. Several of them sold their possessions, and removed to other places of the province, and to the United States, where they could find the gospel. Others are removed by death, so that few of the subscribers are now in Amherst. Those who have come in their places, especially the young generation, having little acquaintance with gospel doctrines, and being hopeless of any relief from you, have now bargained with a minister, whom chance threw in their way, and of which they may repent ere long. Amherst is grown a populous place, and had you sent a minister to it, it might now have been a flourishing congregation, whereas it has been ten years without the gospel, after applying to you for it, and they are perhaps badly provided for at last.

“ About seven years ago, the people of Princetown, and Stanhope, and St Peter’s, in the Island of St John, applied to you for two ministers, and they have waited ever since with patience (or rather impatience), frequently inquiring if there was any hope of a speedy answer to their petitions. For a number of years, we returned for answer, that ministers might soon be expected ; but we are ashamed to give them that answer any longer, and now we know not what to say. The people stand in the need of the gospel almost as much as any people on the face of the earth ; for, beside all other considerations, their being in an island prevents

them from having so ready access to other means of knowledge, as if they were on the continent ; and they are surrounded with papists, who have always one or more priests among them, who use all their dexterity in making converts, especially among the young generation. There are in the island St John, eight or ten other settlements that would require supply of sermon, being yet so weak that they cannot support ministers for themselves. It is a great trial of patience to wait seven years for a minister, and to have an opportunity of hearing the gospel only for two or three Sabbaths during all that time. There are good christians in the island St John, who, in all probability, have not heard five sermons these twenty-five years ; and probably there are some there twenty-five years old, who never heard a sermon. Who would not compassionate this people ? We hope two ministers would be very agreeably situated amongst them, and in a short time there would be a demand for a number more. We earnestly beseech the Synod to consider the case of this island, and to send over two ministers to them as soon as possible.

“ The people of Douglas, in this province, were the next to petition you for a minister. This congregation is very forward and eager to obtain the gospel, but withal impatient of delay ; so that there is danger, as they are not sufficiently aware of the evil of error, that they will not wait so long as you would wish or expect ; but, being wearied out, will apply to some other quarter for that help, which they will give over hoping for from you. A part of this congregation have an opportunity of hearing Mr Brown occasionally, as there are but a few miles of water between them and his congregation ; but this seems only to make them more eager to have a minister of their own. There is therefore special need for the Synod to consider the case of this people, and grant their petition. Though the people of Miramichi, in New Brunswick, be last in their application, yet they themselves consider their case as so deplorable above others, especially on account of the breaking dispensations they have met with,



that they are entitled to be first answered ; and indeed it is hard to deny their claim.

“ It is difficult to say which of these four places is most in need. But if the Synod cannot supply them all at once, let some of them be supplied, and the rest as soon after as possible, if they will wait.

“ The people of Cape Breton petitioned the session of Pictou, before our erection into a presbytery, to appoint their minister to pay them a visit, to preach the gospel to them, and to give them advice and direction how to obtain a minister for themselves. The petition was granted, but the visit could not be paid till August last ; partly because so few of them were desirous of the gospel (the generality of them being lukewarm), that they could scarcely support it ; and partly because there was no hope of getting their petition granted for a long time, through the lukewarmness of ministers to come out ; and because so many other places were entitled to be supplied before them, they were advised to delay sending home their petition for some time. But had they a minister, there is no reason to doubt that he would soon form a congregation ; for the gospel would be a new thing to them, and, through the divine blessing, would run as it did among the Gentiles at first. Were there a minister there, application would soon be made to him from Newfoundland and other places. In all appearance, nothing but the want of ministers prevents the gospel from spreading rapidly through this province, New Brunswick, part of both the Canadas, Island St John, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, &c. Had ministers been forward to come to our assistance, since the first of us arrived here, the gospel would already have been spread considerably through these countries.”

Upon receiving this address, the Synod adopted immediate measures for sending out an additional supply of preachers to these destitute provinces. In the spring of 1799, Mr Francis Pringle, who had been ordained at Gilnakirk in Ireland, gave in his demission of that charge, and the Synod missioned him with a view to his settlement in the island

of St John's. He arrived at New York in the following season, on his way to Nova Scotia; and the presbytery of Pennsylvania being greatly in want of preachers, sent home a petition to the Synod, requesting that Mr Pringle, instead of proceeding to his original destination, might be permitted to labour within their bounds. The Synod sent out word that it was their earnest wish that Mr Pringle should proceed to Nova Scotia, but that if circumstances rendered it impracticable for him to go thither, they would not stand in the way of his being detained by the presbytery. After repeated disappointments, occasioned by young men having expressed a willingness to undertake a mission to Nova Scotia, and then drawing back from their engagements, the Synod sent out Mr Alexander Dick. He arrived at Halifax in August, 1802; and soon after his arrival, he received a call from the inhabitants of the township of Douglas. On his way out he spent a few days at the Bay of Bull's in Newfoundland; where he found amongst the inhabitants a deplorable destitution of the means of grace. Writing to a friend, he says: "During my stay in Newfoundland, I made it my business to inquire about the state of religion, and found it in a very languishing condition. There is only one society in all this province that deserves to be called religious. About forty or fifty of the members reside in St John's. I had the satisfaction to get acquainted with one of the principal supports of this little congregation; and if I may judge of the whole from this specimen, I must think well of them. I found him well informed, sound in the great doctrines of our holy religion, and pious and regular in his conversation. He was particularly well acquainted with the arminian controversy, and held the doctrines of that system in great abhorrence. The members of that society have frequent meetings for prayer and conference, beside their stated and ordinary meeting for public worship upon the Lord's day. They have lately received a minister from England of Lady Huntingdon's Methodists. He is a man of considerable literature, and is a plain evangelical preacher, endeavouring

to assist the hearts of his audience, while himself is the example in sobriety, faith, and purity. But the great body of inhabitants in this place are far from acting in any measure corresponding to these of this little society.

“ — How firmly is the kingdom of Satan established in the hearts of men, and how numerous and powerful are the supports of this kingdom in many places of the world, and especially in this bay ! How affecting to see betwixt two and three hundred poor sinners amusing themselves in different kinds of sport upon the Lord’s day, and no one to speak any thing to them about Christ and his salvation.

“ — At present I am in the township of Douglas, the inhabitants of which have given me a call. The congregation is upwards of forty miles in length, and my labours must be great. I have to preach in three different places ; one half of my time in one of these, and the other half divided betwixt the other two. I do not intend, however, to take charge of the whole. The labour would be far more than what I am capable to endure. I intend taking charge of the one half, but to give as much supply to the other as I can overtake, till they are provided with a minister of their own. My trials for ordination are finished, and the ordination is to take place in the month of June. We have sent you an address and petition for further help in the work of the ministry ; and I earnestly beg that every means may be employed for our speedy relief. There is nothing here to intimidate any person to come over and preach the gospel of Christ. I have seen the people, and they are kind and generous. I have travelled through part of the country, and the roads are much better than I expected. I have felt the heat, and it is agreeable. I have been upon the sea, and have suffered no shipwrecks. I have likewise seen the greatest part of the winter, and can say, that the cold is not intolerable. But, instead of any thing to intimidate, there is much to invite ministers of the gospel to this quarter of the world. Multitudes are crying for relief ; they would set their faces heavenward, but have no minister to point out the way



thither. Two ministers are needed for St John's, one for Amherst, and one for this part of the country, and several more for other parts with which I am unacquainted. How distressing is the case of the presbytery, when petitions are laid before them, and they are obliged to tell the petitioners, some of whom have come from great distances, that they can give them no supply of sermon *this year*."

The arrival of Mr Dick in Nova Scotia occasioned great joy to the brethren in that presbytery. The hopes of the people were excited, that a fresh supply of preachers was about to follow. Soon after his arrival, the presbytery agreed to renew their application to the Synod for more labourers to be sent out. An address, drawn up in eloquent language, and subscribed by all the brethren, was forwarded to this country. As the Synod found considerable difficulty in inducing their preachers, at that period, to undertake missions across the Atlantic, the address from the presbytery of Nova Scotia contained the following powerful appeal on this subject. It deserves a place in this record, both because it shows the excellent spirit which animated these good men in their missionary labours, and because the perusal of it is well fitted to excite ministers and preachers, in the present day, to devote themselves to a similar work:—

"We have more reason than ever to say, 'The harvest is great, but the labourers are few.' Though we are thankful for the coming of Mr Dick, we are sorry that he had to come alone. We cannot help expressing our sincerest grief at the continued backwardness of young preachers to come out to this country. There are four petitions from this neighbourhood, lying before you, for seven years, and some of them much more, still unanswered. How many of the young generation are growing up in these congregations, without God, without Christ, without hope, insensible of their sin or danger, who might, if they were under the charge of faithful ministers, be an ornament to the gospel profession! How many souls in these congregations have died, perhaps perished, in this long interval, looking to you and to the

young preachers under your inspection, for the means of life ! Unheard, unheeded, they have been crying at this time, ‘ Help, we perish ! We have heard of you, that you are zealous for the glory of God, the honour of the Mediator, and the salvation of your fellow creatures, even of our souls. We have heard, that you are peculiarly careful to teach the pure and simple truths of the gospel, and to guard against the various errors which false teachers and corrupt nature embrace, instead of the truth ; and to lead perishing souls, in the most direct manner, to Jesus the Saviour. We are without the means of grace. We have no ministers, few books, little knowledge. Unlearned and unordained men sometimes offer their assistance to teach us ; but we think, we may as well offer to teach them, though we cannot discern between right and wrong, good and evil. Providence has directed us to you. Therefore, to you we have applied. Under God, we have committed our souls to your charge. Send us speedy help. Let the zeal, which we hear abounds in you, move you to compassion for our destitute souls. Turn not a deaf ear to our cry. Or, if you cannot help us, tell us whither to apply.’ Such has been the cry of these people, and we are persuaded that it would have been answered long ago, if the young preachers under your inspection had either the spirit of Isaiah (Here am I, send me), or the zeal of Roman Catholic priests ; for permit us to tell you, that the papists in this part of the world can more easily get out priests, than we ministers. The papists here are few, compared to the protestants, and they are not so destitute of instructors, for they have more priests by far in proportion to their number ; yet two priests arrived here from Scotland this season, to propagate the Romish faith, and but one protestant clergyman.

“ — Reverend fathers and brethren, it is irksome for us to dwell on such points as the removing of difficulties, and the using of arguments to make ministers and preachers, called to serve Christ in a foreign country, to obey their Master’s voice ; for what else are we doing but reproaching

them? Is it not the greatest honour, as soon as they know the Master wants their service, to need no argument, to fear no danger, to brave every difficulty, cheerfully to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him whithersoever he calls? Is it possible that Christ's ministers can expect to grow in grace, to advance in communion with God, or any solid good, by shutting their eyes upon the proper work, or neglecting it when seen? When ministers or preachers choose not to discern the Lord's call, and to know his voice as directed to them, they are fleeing from the presence of the Lord as really as Jonah did. But in vain do they hide themselves from him, whose eyes are as a flame of fire. Most foolish and delusive are all their artifices to elude his call, who searches the heart, and to whom all things are naked and open. The various calls that have been sent from this quarter to you, the Lord has directed, and does direct, to some individual, preachers or ministers, under your inspection, and in whatsoever place or corner within your bounds they may be, there the Lord sees them, and thence he orders them. If they neglect to know (for by fair inquiry they may know) themselves pitched upon by him, or if they do not obey, he will not hold them guiltless. Assuredly the sovereign Judge will charge them with the blood of souls, and no assiduity elsewhere will justify them from this awful charge. They are guilty of the blood of souls, and that with high aggravation, for they injure not merely those few congregations who have already addressed you, but others which would have been ere now, and perhaps hundreds more, which might in a few years to come, be formed round them; and who knows to how many generations the injury may extend? It is no small aggravation of their crime, that they decline an invitation to no very great distance from a civilized people, partly their own countrymen; while others fear not to go, uninvited to savage people, to heathen nations, to the utmost ends of the earth. Would such ministers or preachers reflect but for a moment what must be our present feelings for the disappointed vacancies, we think they could



not escape the pangs of self-condemnation. Formerly when we met in presbytery, or went our rounds to give supply, the vacancies nearest us requested as much supply as possible ; and those at a distance, that we would visit them next year. This we, as far as possible, complied with, and granted their request. But now, on the coming of Mr Dick, the hopes of all are raised ; many look for a fixed ministry, but it can be granted only to one ; and so we must see the tears of the disappointed, and hear the sighs of the needy. Your land was lately visited with scarcity of bread ; many had large families, and but little to give them. Imagine you see one such large family almost famished ; the anxious parent brings home the scanty portion he could provide. How wishfully do his dear babes look ! each could take the whole. With what anguish must he say to some, ‘ Here is bread, but not for you.’ Such must be our feelings, and such our language, to many who have waited long.

“ — Reverend fathers and brethren, it may be proper to enlarge your own views of this work. You have seen our part of the world only upon a map ; where a large country will appear as nothing. Had you no other acquaintance with Great Britain, your ideas of it would be indeed diminutive ; you would find it hard to believe that a famous church could ever be there. Perhaps you would see many things more necessary than to send ministers thither from a distance, and at considerable expense. So you may think with regard to us. But were you to travel through the British provinces here, and see the thousands of souls that are scattered through the woods, destitute of spiritual provision, without knowledge, and without means of knowledge, how would your hearts yearn upon them ! How feelingly would you bewail their forlorn condition ! Turning your mind to your native country, you could not help exclaiming : ‘ O Scotland ! overcharged with ministers ! surfeited with preaching ! What hast thou to account for ! Would that the half of thy gospel ministers were transported, and planted in the wilderness ! Then it would rejoice and blossom as the rose.’ You

would not then wonder at our importunity. You would see the propriety of acting with energy and dispatch in this great work. Be not discouraged at its greatness. Go on in the strength of the Lord. You know that it is nothing for him to do great things by small instruments, and to accomplish very great designs from very small beginnings."

The General Synod at home felt a deep interest in the success of their transatlantic missions. When they met in August 1803, a proposal was made that a committee be appointed to visit the Divinity Hall, then holding its sittings at Whitburn, and converse with the students, with a view to obtain missionaries for America. This proposal it was not deemed expedient to adopt; but the Synod appointed a committee to converse on the subject with such of the preachers as were present; and some of the young men, who had completed their course of study, were enjoined to be licensed, by their respective presbyteries, with a special view to this object. The Synod further gave it as their judgment, that Mr Murray, minister at Johnshaven, should submit to a missionary appointment, with a view to his labouring in the United States. As Mr Murray was not present, notice was sent to him of this appointment, and he was required to return an answer before the Synod concluded its present meeting. Mr Murray, in his answer, declared that the infirm state of his constitution presented an insuperable obstacle to his undertaking such a mission.

Mr Thomas M'Culloch, who had been for some time ordained at Stewarton, in Ayrshire, resigned into the hands of the presbytery his charge of that congregation, and embarked for Nova Scotia, that he might take part in the ministry, along with the Secession brethren who were labouring in that distant province. He arrived with his family at Pictou, in the beginning of November, 1803; and, in the month of June the following year, he was admitted by the presbytery of Nova Scotia, to the pastoral inspection of the associate congregation of the Harbour of Pictou. The energy, zeal, and varied literary attainments of this individual, peculiarly

qualified him for the work in which he engaged. His arrival occasioned great joy to the church in that quarter; and the result has shown that the expectations which his coming excited, were not ill founded; for, by his unwearied and diversified labours, he has promoted, in an eminent degree, both the literary and the religious interests of that province. Soon after his settlement in Nova Scotia, Mr M'Culloch suggested to his brethren the idea of forming an academical institution, in which young men might be trained for the ministry, or educated for any of the learned professions; and a considerable sum was subscribed by the people of Pictou, to carry the project into effect. In a letter written by Mr M'Gregor, of Pictou, two years after Mr M'Culloch's arrival, referring to this proposal of erecting an academy, he says, " The increasing demand for ministers seems to intimate the necessity of raising them in this country. The great expense of every thing here, renders this undertaking next to hopeless in our circumstances; yet Mr M'Culloch, who started the idea, has sanguine hopes. Pictou people have subscribed about £1000, a more liberal subscription than they are well able to pay. We expect some money from the province-treasury, if we give our seminary a little name, as not rivalling the university which government has established. We expect great assistance from Britain and Ireland. We intend to send Mr M'Culloch home to beg. I fear that it will produce few ministers in my day, but I do not think it improper to make a beginning, for it is highly probable that it will succeed by degrees, and be very beneficial to posterity."

Unforeseen difficulties prevented this excellent scheme from being accomplished at the time it was originally proposed. But, after a delay of several years, the project was again revived. Subscriptions were procured, and the Pictou college was erected, for which a charter was obtained from the legislature, in 1816, and a small annual sum (£400) was given out of the public treasury for its support. The reputation which Mr M'Culloch had acquired in the pro-



vince, from his literary attainments, pointed him out as an individual every way qualified to undertake the superintendence of such an institution; and he was solicited by the trustees to become its president. To his indefatigable zeal and persevering efforts, this institution has been indebted for no small share of its success.

While the General Associate Synod were thus actively engaged in extending the boundaries of the Redeemer's kingdom, by means of their missionaries abroad,\* they were no less usefully employed in promoting the interests of religion and of literature at home. Various measures were adopted by them, which were well calculated to render their existing institutions both more efficient and more permanent. The education of the young men who were designed for the office of the ministry, had ever been regarded by them as an object of great importance; and, from time to time, committees were appointed to consider what improvements might be made in the course of study, or to suggest such regulations as might be necessary to secure the full benefit of the course already pursued. In October 1801, the following regulations on this subject were adopted:—

1. That young men intended for the ministry shall be examined with regard to their proficiency in the Latin language, at the time of their going to college, by the presbytery in whose bounds they reside.

2. The presbyteries shall give them directions as to the classes which it may be proper for them to attend every session, and the books which it is proper for them to read, on those branches of learning in which they are engaged.

3. The Synod shall every year appoint either a committee or presbyteries to examine students in philosophy, who shall

\* The exertions of the Synod were responded to, in a very liberal and public spirited manner, by the people under their charge. More than £1000 was collected by them in one year, to defray the expenses of foreign missions, and also to assist weak congregations. This was a large sum, when we consider the humble circumstances of the mass of the people, and the money which they contributed annually for the support of gospel ordinances amongst themselves.—See *Christian Magazine*, vol. ii. new series, p. 123.

receive none to examination but such as come attested by their ministers, as in full communion; and the Synod shall charge the presbyteries or committee to examine, with the utmost diligence and care, those who appear before them, and to have their eye particularly on those dangerous opinions which are taught in our universities.

4. That no one shall be attested for examination by a committee, unless he has been previously examined by the presbytery in whose bounds he resides, in Latin and Greek, and his progress in these languages has been included in the attestation. If any presbytery examine for admission to the Divinity Hall, the first part of their examination shall be on the languages above mentioned, if they have not previously given satisfaction.

5. That the Divinity Hall meet every year on the third Wednesday of August, and hold its sittings at least eight weeks; and that students in divinity shall be required to attend, at least five weeks every Session, unless they can give to the ministers of presbytery a sufficient excuse, otherwise their attendance shall not be reckoned regular and sufficient, unless they make up the deficiency in future sessions.

6. Students of divinity shall be required to deliver at least one discourse every year before the presbytery; and presbyteries shall be in readiness to report to the Synod, when required.

7. Presbyteries shall use their best endeavour to recommend to students the reading of proper books in divinity, and shall frequently examine them on these books.

8. The General Synod shall require from their presbyteries, every year, an account of their diligence in observing these regulations.

The Synod next turned its attention to the state of its funds. There were three objects to which the funds of the association were applied; these were, defraying the current expenses of the Synod, the support of foreign missions, and giving aid to such ministers' widows as might be in indigent

circumstances. In order that the supplies given into their treasury, for these important purposes, might be regular and permanent, the following regulations were adopted in May 1805:—

1. That the fund for defraying the current expense of the Synod, shall be distinct from the fund for foreign missions, and also from the widow's fund.

2. That for the Synod's fund there shall be an annual collection, in each congregation, under the inspection of the Synod, in Scotland and England. Congregations in a vacant state not to be excepted.

3. That if this collection shall be omitted, or in case of delay, the presbytery in the bounds shall deal with the session, and report their diligence to the first ensuing meeting of the General Synod.

4. That sessions be at liberty to deduct the ordinary day's collection; but the surplus shall be remitted to the presbytery collector, to be by him transmitted to the treasurer of the Synod, accompanied with a written note, bearing that the sum specified is the whole amount of the collection for the Synod's fund for that year; and this note shall be signed by the moderator or session-clerk.

5. That each session shall be furnished with a printed annual report of the state of this fund, signed by the treasurer of the Synod, wherein the particular sums received from each congregation shall be specified; likewise the different disbursements, and the purposes for which these disbursements were made; and, in case of any legacy or donation bequeathed to the use of the fund, this also shall be mentioned in the report.

6. That sessions shall be furnished with a printed copy of the above regulations, accompanied with an intimation, that the first annual report will be made as soon after next meeting of the General Synod, in the ensuing year, as the treasurer's accounts can be made out.

7. That the transmission of the above regulations to sessions, shall be accompanied with an address to the christian



people, stating some of those important purposes to which the Synod's fund is subservient, and urging liberality in contribution, according to their circumstances.

A committee was appointed to prepare an address, to be sent to each congregation, along with a copy of these regulations. At the same meeting, the Synod took into consideration the maintenance of the gospel ministry; and, in order to remind congregations of the obligations under which they lay to attend to this duty, and also to furnish a directory to presbyteries, in the granting of a moderation to any congregation that might apply for it, they enacted the following regulations on this subject:—

1. With reference to vacant congregations, or those who apply for a second minister: That presbyteries be enjoined not to grant a moderation, until they be fully satisfied that the sum offered by such congregations, in name of stipend, is adequate to the decent and comfortable subsistence of a minister, all circumstances considered; as well as that they are able to fulfil their engagements; and, further, that (unless in very extraordinary cases, which evidently appear to justify a deviation from the general rule), £80 per annum, and a house, be the lowest; provided always, that this shall be understood as referring to weak congregations in the country, and not forming the standard for others who are strong, and might do more.

2. That an inquiry be forthwith instituted by each presbytery, into the manner in which the several ministers within their bounds are supported: and, for this purpose, that the members of each session be required to send a written report to the first meeting of their presbytery after Whitsunday every year; and, for this year, that each presbytery, before Martinmas first, shall send a requisition to the elders of each session under their inspection, to transmit such statement to the next meeting of that presbytery.

3. That if the members of any session neglect or refuse to do so, this deficiency shall be marked, in order that the Synod may, in due time, be apprised of it; only the members of

that session shall be allowed to supply the omission afterwards, which shall also be notified.

4. That presbyteries be enjoined to deal with such congregations as appear to be deficient in their duty of supporting the gospel, in proportion to their ability; and that they be always in readiness to give in a report of the result of their inquiry to the next meeting of the General Synod, if required.

A copy of this enactment was ordered to be sent to each session, and a committee was appointed to prepare an address upon the subject, copies of which were also to be circulated among the congregations.

To secure regularity in preachers fulfilling their appointments, and to prevent any disorders that might arise from ordained ministers resigning their charge, on insufficient grounds, and attempting to thrust themselves, in an irregular way, upon other congregations, the Synod further adopted, at this meeting, the following resolutions, in reference to ministers and preachers, and ordered them to be printed:—

1. That no minister shall be loosed from his congregation, by a presbytery, unless the case be very clear, according to the stated rules of the church; and when the presbytery are much divided in sentiment, or the cause appears difficult, he shall not be loosed without taking the advice of the provincial synod of the bounds, or of the General Synod, if it shall meet first: And when such a cause comes before a provincial synod, unless there be a considerable degree of harmony in their sentiments, the business shall be referred to the General Synod.

2. That no minister, who may be loosed from his charge, shall be employed in the bounds of other presbyteries, without the consent of, and a regular attestation from, the presbytery or provincial synod by which he was loosed.

3. That no preacher, who may receive a call to any congregation, shall be detained in the presbytery of the bounds, or called away from another presbytery, but in the way of one being provided in his place.

4. That no preacher shall, without leave asked and granted, remove from the presbytery where he is stationed; and if he neglect to fulfil his appointments, he shall not be employed by any minister or presbytery, till he hath given satisfaction to the presbytery where the offence was committed, or to the presbytery into whose bounds he removes, in consequence of the business being regularly transmitted to them by the other presbytery.

5. That in all ordinary cases, the Synod shall endeavour so to regulate the appointments of preachers, that there shall be no difficulty in fulfilling them.

6. That the regulations as to the appointments of the preachers, shall be finally settled before the last sederunt of their meeting, unless some weighty reasons be given to the contrary.

By a law of the Synod,\* students of divinity were required “to join in the bond” for renewing the covenants, previous to receiving licence. The operation of this law had been suspended, since the year 1798, in consequence of the Synod being engaged in preparing a new Testimony, and in revising their official documents. This business, which had occupied their attention at successive meetings, was now completed; and all those ministers and preachers who had been ordained or licensed since 1798, were required to join in the renewing of the covenants, in the presence of the Synod. The day on which this ceremony was appointed to take place, was Thursday, the 2d of May, 1805, during the time that the Synod was holding its ordinary meeting at Edinburgh. Students, elders, and such of the people as might be desirous to join in the bond, were called upon to come forward and co-operate with their brethren in this solemn work. Twenty ministers, nine preachers, eighteen students, and a number of elders connected with different congregations, gave in their names as willing to covenant.

Mr James Robertson, minister at Kilmarnock, commenced the services of the day by preaching a sermon from

\* See p. 381, vol. i.



Rev. xiv. 1, "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Several ministers then read in succession, with a short prayer in the intervals, the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, *Profession of Faith*, and *Engagement to Duties*, all of which had been previously reviewed and sanctioned by the Synod. A solemn confession of sins was then made, by one of the ministers, in a direct address to the throne of grace. After this, the covenanting ministers, preachers, students, and elders, lifted up their right hand, and, in presence of the Synod and of a crowded audience, solemnly swore, steadfastly to adhere to the *Profession of Faith* and *Engagement to Duties*, which had been read in their hearing. In making this solemn declaration, they were joined by a considerable number of people connected with the Secession in Edinburgh. An opportunity was also given to those who had formerly covenanted, to signify their adherence to their former deed, and to testify their cordial approbation of what had been done in their presence; which testimony was cheerfully given, by their holding up their right hand, at the close of the ceremony. The bond was then subscribed by the covenanters, in presence of the Synod and the congregation; and during the time of subscription, suitable addresses were delivered by several of the ministers. The services of the forenoon were concluded with prayer and praise. In the afternoon, Mr Alexander Pringle, minister at Perth, preached a sermon suited to the occasion, from Psalm cxix. 106, "I have sworn, and I will perform, that I will keep thy righteous judgments."

As many of the persons who engaged in the transactions of that day are still living, and as some of them are taking a prominent part in the Voluntary Church Controversy, at present carrying on in this country, I deem it proper to introduce into this narrative the "bond" which they swore and subscribed. This I do for the purpose of showing that the bond in which *they* joined, was of a different complexion

from that which our forefathers swore, when they subscribed the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, being more accordant both with reason and Scripture than either of these bonds; and that, so far from its being opposed to Voluntary Church principles, there is not a single sentence in it, that does not strictly harmonize with these principles. So desirous were the Synod to guard against any misinterpretation of their views, as if by “renewing the covenants,” they were to be understood as giving any countenance to the intolerant principles of those who subscribed the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, that they introduced into their new Testimony the following passage, utterly disclaiming all methods of promoting religion, that were inconsistent with due freedom of conscience:—“Whatever means any person, either in former or present times, might think themselves bound by the covenant to employ, for the extirpation of these evils (viz. popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, and schism), yet we, in adhering to the religious reformation engaged to in this covenant, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with liberty of conscience, in prosecuting the ends of it.” And, as if this declaration were not sufficient, they afterwards introduced, in a note appended to the Acknowledgment of Sins, a similar disclaimer in the following words:—“The Synod, in adhering to the religious reformation engaged to in the Covenants, National and Solemn League, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with due liberty of conscience, in prosecuting the ends of it.” \*

After acknowledging their own sins, and the prevailing sins of the land, they solemnly swore and then subscribed the following declaration, which is entitled, a *Profession of Faith, and Engagement to Duties*:—“Wherefore, seeing it is our duty, as a sinning people, not only to confess our iniquities, and be humbled for them, but also, by faith, to take

\* Narrative and Testimony adopted by the Synod, May, 1804. Pp. 159 and 219.

hold of God's covenant of grace, revealed to us in the gospel, avouching the Lord to be our God, according to the tenor of this covenant, devoting ourselves to him as his people, and returning to him from whom we have revolted : and as it is our duty, in the faith of his free mercy through Jesus Christ, and trusting in him for the grace and strength which are promised in his covenant, to engage unto, and pursue after, reformation and the advancement of his kingdom, which is not of this world ; convinced also in our minds, and confessing with our mouths, that, as by the word of God, so also by the covenants of our ancestors, the present and succeeding generations in these lands are bound firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine, worship, presbyterial church government, and discipline of the house of God, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, and summed up in our subordinate standards : Therefore, in obedience to the command of God, conformably to the practice of the godly in former times, and according to the laudable example of our worthy and religious progenitors, in the foresaid covenants,

“ We all, and every one of us, though sensible of the deceitfulness and unbelief of our own hearts, and frequently perplexed with doubts and fears about our actual believing, yet desiring, in the Lord's strength, to glorify him, by believing his word of grace, contained in his covenant of promise, and, in the faith of his promise, to devote ourselves to the Lord as his people : WE DO, with our hands lifted up to THE MOST HIGH GOD, hereby profess, and, before God, angels, and men, solemnly declare, that, through the grace of God, and according to the measure of his grace given unto us, we desire to take hold, with our whole hearts, of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only propitiation for our sins ; of his *righteousness*, as the only foundation of our access to God, and acceptance with him ; of his *covenant* of rich and free promises, as our only charter for the heavenly inheritance ; of his *word*, as our perfect and only rule of faith and practice, to which nothing is, at any time, to be added, either by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men ; and of



his *Spirit*, as our only guide, to lead us into all truth, and keep us in the way of God's commandments. We avouch the Lord to be our God ; and, in the strength of his grace, we promise and swear, by the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, that we shall walk in his way, keep his commandments, and hearken to his voice ; and, particularly, that we shall, by the grace of God, continue and abide in the profession, faith, and obedience of the true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, presbyterial church government, and discipline ; and that we shall, in our several stations, places, and callings, and according to the measure of our knowledge, contend and testify against all contrary evils, errors, and corruptions, particularly those mentioned in the preceding Acknowledgment of Sins.

“ In like manner, we promise and swear, that, by all means which are lawful and warrantable for us, according to the word of God, the received and approved standards of this church, and our known principles, we shall, in our several stations and callings, and according to our opportunities in providence, endeavour the reformation of religion, in Britain and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the word of God ; and to promote and advance our covenanted conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Form of Church-government, and Directory for Worship, as these are received by the Secession Church : \* We likewise en-

\* In a note appended to the Acknowledgment of Sins, the Synod make the following declaration, explanatory of the sense in which certain parts of these subordinate standards were received by them, as a church :—“ Though the Synod hereby declare their approbation of the presbyterial government of the church, which is materially contained in the tract compiled by the Westminster Assembly, commonly called *The Form of Church Government*, yet they are not to be considered as adopting every thing in that tract, as absolutely necessary to presbyterial government.

“ And in mentioning the Directory for Public Worship, the Synod only mean, that they consider that little book as adapted to give direction in the worship of God ; but they do not bind themselves to use that book as a liturgy, or always to follow it in every article : And this is all the use that was intended to be made of it by the Assembly who composed it.”—*Narrative and Testimony*, p. 219.

gage, by all lawful means, and according as a door may be opened to us in providence, to promote the genuine interests of the kingdom of Christ in every other part of the world.

“And, in regard we are taught by the word of God, and bound by our Covenants, National and Solemn League, to live together in the fear of God, and in love one to another, and to encourage one another in the work and cause of God ; and that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world : Therefore, in a dependance upon the Lord’s grace and strength, we do, in the same manner, promise and swear, that we shall, in our several places and callings, encourage and strengthen one another’s hands, in pursuing the end and design of this our solemn oath and covenant ; that we shall endeavour a life and conversation becoming the gospel of Christ ; that, in our personal callings, and particular families, we shall study to be good examples to one another, of all godliness and righteousness, and of every duty that we owe to God and man ; that we shall not give ourselves up to a detestable indifference and neutrality in the cause of God ; but, denying ourselves and our own things, we shall, above all things, seek the honour of God, the advancement of his cause, and the good of his people ; and that, through grace, forsaking the counsels of flesh and blood, and not leaning on carnal confidences, we shall endeavour to depend upon the Lord, to walk by the rule of his word, and to hearken to his voice in the dispensation of the gospel. In all which, professing our own weakness, we earnestly pray to God, who is the Father of Mercies, that he may be merciful to us, through his Son Jesus Christ, and enable us, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to do our duty, to the praise of his grace in the churches. Amen.” \*

Such was the bond, or *Engagement*, to which a solemn adherence was pledged on the above occasion. With the exception of the particular speciality, relating to the presby-

\* Narrative and Testimony. Pp. 245-248.

terial form of church government, there was not a single sentiment in it, to which an humble and sincere christian might not at any time cordially subscribe. Nay, the sentiments which the Engagement contains, are those which christians ought, at all times, openly to avow; and they do virtually make a public profession of them, when they join in the fellowship of the church; and this profession which they make may be considered by some as rendering unnecessary such a public exhibition as the one above described.

At this period, a movement was made among the Seceders connected with the Burgher and Anti-Burgher Synods in Ireland, to effect a union. An aggregate meeting was held, for this purpose, at Lurgan, in the month of March, 1805, where certain propositions were agreed upon, as the basis of a coalescence. When the General Associate Synod met in May, the same year, though no official intelligence had been received by them, concerning the proposed union, yet they considered it proper to take the matter into consideration; and a committee was appointed to prepare a statement, explanatory of the Synod's views on this subject. The following paper, drawn up by the committee, was approved of by the Synod, and ordered to be transmitted to the brethren in Ireland:—"The Synod having learned, by common report, by the public papers, and by some of their own members, who were lately in that country, that a coalescence has been proposed betwixt the two bodies of Seceders in Ireland; and having had two propositions laid before them, said to have been generally agreed to, in a conjoint meeting held at Lurgan, in the month of March last, containing the terms upon which they propose to coalesce; and the Synod, finding that they had not time at present to enter on any particular consideration of said propositions, have judged it their duty to suggest to their brethren the few following things, which deserve their serious consideration.

"That the first of these propositions is expressed in such



a general and indefinite manner, as renders it uncertain what reformation principles are precisely intended ; and contains a very unlimited approbation of the public papers exhibited by the Secession Church, before the breach in the Associate Synod ; a formal approbation of some of which was never expressly required in Scotland, and which, we apprehend, are neither generally known nor read by Seceders in Ireland.

“ And that the second of these propositions, as it was presented by the committee, properly speaking, neither explicitly affirms nor denies any thing. As the maintenance of the true religion, either absolutely considered, or as exhibited in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as that was received by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Anno 1647, was never the subject of disputation in the controversy about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the burgess-oath. The matter in question was concerning what was called the true religion, as it was then professed and authorised by the laws of the land, which was the description which the foresaid oath gave of the true religion. The Synod are particularly surprised, that ever that disorderly and offensive resolution, concerning the decision of Synod being a term of communion, or not, which was the immediate cause of the breach, should have been introduced into a country, where, we are carefully told, that the burgess-oath is a non-entity. And they cannot understand how moral good and evil should be bounded by mountains, rivers, or firths.

“ The Synod do not think that there is any particular necessity for requiring a positive condemnation of said oath in Ireland, if there was not an allowance of the lawfulness of it, and a virtual opposition to the sentence of Synod, in the condemnation of it.”

This paper was laid before the provincial synod of Ireland, at a meeting held at Belfast, on the 16th of July, 1805 ; and the following communication was, at the same time,

presented from their brethren, belonging to the Burgher Associate Synod in Ireland, dated Cookstown, June 19, 1805 :—

“ Rev. and Dear Brother,—We write to let you know, that we have received the propositions which were adopted by the aggregate meeting at Lurgan ; and with very little alterations approved of them, as the enclosed minute will show. We hope they will meet with your acceptance likewise, and that you will take the necessary steps to effect the proposed coalescence. We are sorry that we had not the pleasure of seeing some of your members at our meeting in Cookstown, but trust that the day is not very distant, when we shall always meet you on such occasions. Wishing you divine direction in your proceedings, and an abundant blessing on your ministrations, we remain, your affectionate brethren in the Lord Jesus. Extracted by

“ JOHN ROGERS.”

The following is the minute, referred to in the above letter, containing a copy of the two propositions, which had been agreed on, by the Burgher Synod in Ireland, as intended to form the basis of the proposed union :—

“ Proposition I. That the *status ante litem*, or the state of the Secession Church immediately before the controversy about the burgess-oath, is a proper ground of coalescence ; and that we declare our adherence to the covenanted principles of uniformity, contained in the Confession of Faith, Catechisms Larger and Shorter, Directory for Worship and Presbyterian Government, agreeable unto and founded on the word of God : That we declare our approbation of the Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, in 1736, of the Declinature, Act for the Doctrine of Grace, Act for renewing the Covenants, and Answers by the said Presbytery to the Reasons of Dissent by Mr Nairn.

“ Proposition II. The Associate Synod of Ireland determined by a vote to substitute the following proposition in the room of the article transmitted to them by the committee. That with respect to the religious clause in some burgess-oaths in Scotland, we do not conceive it necessary either to

approve or disapprove ; and we are of opinion, that it should not be made a term of communion in this kingdom."

These two propositions were made the subject of discussion in the Irish provincial synod. After long deliberation, the question was put with regard to the first,—“ Shall the *status ante litem*, as mentioned in the first proposition, be approved of as *one step*, in present circumstances, towards a coalescence ?”—when it carried, with only one dissenting voice, *Approve*. The question was then put with regard to the second,—“ Approve or Disapprove, of the second proposition, as a step towards coalescence ?”—when it carried unanimously, *Disapprove*. A committee was appointed to consider what ought to be substituted in the room of the second proposition. After the committee gave in their report, several proposals were made ; but at length, it was determined, by a unanimous vote, that the following answer should be returned to the brethren of the Burgher Synod :—  
 “ 1. That we are willing to form one church with our Burgher brethren on the first proposition, namely, *status ante litem*. 2. That a testimony be drawn up by both parties, in conformity to the *status ante litem*, and adapted to our present circumstances in Ireland. 3. That a committee be appointed by both sides for this purpose ; and we, on our part, appoint Messrs Campbell, Hunter, and Gardner, as a committee to correspond with our Burgher brethren for said purpose.” The clerk was enjoined to send an extract from the minutes, respecting the coalescence, as an answer to the communication which had been received from the General Associate Synod.\*

It appears that the diversity of opinion entertained concerning the second proposition, prevented the union from taking place, at this time, betwixt the two synods in Ireland ; for I do not find that any farther measures were adopted toward the accomplishing of this object, till several years afterwards. Having failed in effecting a union with their Burgher brethren, an application was made, in the following

\* Christian Magazine for the year 1805, p. 435.



year, to the General Synod, by some of the members connected with the provincial synod in Ireland, requesting them to consider, whether it would not be expedient to allow the brethren in that kingdom to transact their own business, without being in immediate subordination to that court. This proposal it was considered inexpedient to entertain ; and no farther attempt was made at present to disturb the relation, which had hitherto existed betwixt the two synods.

## CHAPTER IV.

Controversy concerning the magistrate's power in matters of religion.

Gives rise to keen discussion. Overtures from the Glasgow and Forfar presbyteries. Committee appointed to prepare the draft of an overture respecting the power of the magistrate. Overture presented. Consideration of it delayed. Remitted to sessions. Committee appointed to extend the Testimony. Draft of a new Narrative and Testimony presented. Former overture superseded. Draft of the Narrative and Testimony considered. Acknowledgment of Sins, &c. reviewed. And remodelled. Act concerning students of divinity. Students not required in present circumstances to covenant. Protest by Messrs Bruce and Aitken. Representation and petition from Mr M'Crie of Edinburgh, concerning power of the civil magistrate. Remonstrances from the sessions of Whitburn and Kirriemuir. Motion made by Mr Bruce. Rejected. Review of the Testimony finished. Testimony enacted and published. Protest by Messrs Bruce, M'Crie, and others. Review of the Narrative finished. Enacted and published. Protest by Messrs M'Crie, Whytock, and others. Introduction added to the Narrative and Testimony. The whole sanctioned by the Synod. New Narrative and Testimony made a term of communion. This resolution modified. Remarks. Manliness and good sense displayed by the Synod. Extracts from the Testimony. Ministers, preachers, and others, to join in the bond. Five ministers protest against the deed about covenanting. Extended reasons of protest presented by these brethren. Declaration of Synod concerning the protest. Remonstrance by Mr Bruce and others. Committee appointed to answer it. Protesting brethren decline the authority of Synod. Withdraw from its communion. Complaint against Mr Aitken. Constitutional Associate Presbytery formed at Whitburn. Reasons assigned for its formation. Mr Aitken's case investigated. Mr Aitken deposed. Charge against Mr M'Crie. Mr M'Crie deposed.

Proceedings in the case of Messrs Hog and Bruce. Death of Mr Hog. Sentence of deposition pronounced on Messrs Bruce and Chalmers. Mr Bruce's address to his congregation. Declaration published by the separating brethren. Loud outcry raised against the Synod. Conduct of Synod defended. Statement of points at issue between the Synod and separating brethren. Remarks on the controversy.

A CONTROVERSY had now been carrying on, for several years, in the Secession Church, respecting the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. This question had occasioned many a keen debate in the church courts. Much eloquence had been expended upon it, in the pulpit; and numerous pamphlets had been called forth by it from the press. This controversy was marked, during the progress of it, by a considerable display of angry feeling, and it terminated, like almost all other controversies, not in the conviction, but in the separation of the belligerent parties. After the usual quantity of harangues, offensive and defensive, had been delivered, and after the full complement of dissents and protests had been entered upon the ecclesiastical records, both sections of the Secession (Burgher and Antiburgher), witnessed the departure, from their respective synods, of a small minority, each of which professed to occupy holier ground, and to lift up a purer banner for the truth, than those from whom they had withdrawn. Instead of mingling the details of this controversy with the transactions recorded in the preceding part of the narrative, and thereby interrupting the continuity of the account, I have thought proper to reserve them, till I reached that period in the history of the General Associate Synod, when I should be able to present these details to the reader in a connected form. At this period I have now arrived. In this chapter I propose retracing my steps for a little, and giving an account of the progress of the question respecting the magistrates' power in matters of religion, following it throughout the different stages of its discussion in the General Associate Synod, until it issued in the separation of a small section from the Synod,



who formed themselves into a distinct ecclesiastical judicatory, and still exist, as a branch of the Secession, in a state of separation from their brethren.

On the 11th of May, 1791, two overtures were laid on the table of the General Associate Synod, one from the presbytery of Glasgow, relating to those passages in the Confession of Faith which sanction the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion,\* and another from the presbytery of Forfar respecting the Testimony held by the Synod. The former required the Synod to give such a statement of their views, concerning the doctrine contained in these objectionable passages, as should be more in accordance with the sentiments held by a large proportion of the brethren : the latter required the Synod to simplify and extend the Testimony. Both overtures were read ; but the Synod did not deem it expedient to enter upon the consideration of them at present. They merely appointed their clerk to transmit a copy of the overtures to each of the provincial synods, that the brethren might have them under their consideration till next meeting.

At their next meeting, held in May 1792, a motion was made that a committee be appointed to prepare the draft of an act, in accordance with the spirit of the overture from Glasgow presbytery. This motion was agreed to ; and Messrs Ramsay, Bruce (the Professor), James Robertson, and Taylor, with the clerk of the Synod, were appointed a committee for the purpose specified. Mr Aitken (of Kirriemuir) craved to have it marked, that he did not agree to the appointment of this committee. The overture from the presbytery of Forfar, respecting the Testimony, was recommended to the consideration of provincial synods and presbyteries, and they were to be able to report, at next meeting of the General Synod, that they had devoted at least one sederunt to a special consideration of this subject.

When the Synod met in May, 1793, the committee now mentioned presented the draft of an act, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, which

\* See these passages quoted in p. 42 of this volume.

was read, and a considerable time was spent in conversing on the subject, when the farther consideration of it was delayed till a future sederunt. But in consequence of the press of other matters, they had not time to resume the consideration of it at this meeting. They appointed an interim meeting to be held in the month of October, for the express purpose of considering this question, and also for the purpose of considering the overture from the Forfar presbytery.

The Synod met, according to appointment, on the 15th of October. The meeting was opened with a sermon by Mr George Murray, who preached on Rev. iii. 11, "Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Messrs John Heugh, Alexander Pringle, and David Black, were afterwards employed in prayer, with praise in the intervals. They then adjourned to meet on the following day, when the moderator, with Messrs James Robertson and Hay, engaged in prayer previous to their entering upon the business which had called them together. A discussion arose which of the two overtures, above mentioned, should be first considered, when it was decided by a vote, that the overture from the Glasgow presbytery, respecting the power of the civil magistrate, should have the precedence. Mr Aitken craved to have it marked, that he thought the overture from the Forfar presbytery, respecting the simplifying and extending of the Testimony, was entitled to previous consideration.

After a long time spent in considering the Glasgow overture, whether it would be expedient to pass it into an act, the Synod found that many members had not had an opportunity of perusing it ; and they therefore delayed the farther discussion of it, and ordered it to be printed, and a copy of it to be sent to each minister and session, that they might be prepared to give judgment concerning it at next meeting.

Next day (the 17th), the Synod entered upon the consideration of the overture for simplifying and extending the Testimony, from the Forfar presbytery. A long discussion ensued, at the close of which a motion was made, "That a committee

be appointed to prepare the draft of an act for extending the Testimony held by them, in opposition to the errors and evils that have prevailed since the Secession Testimony was stated, and particularly in opposition to the dreadful abounding of arian and socinian heresies, and the latitudinarian system of the present times; but delay that part of the overture respecting the simplification of the Testimony." The first part of this motion was unanimously adopted, and Messrs Colin Brown, John Gray, Alexander Pringle, James Aitken, John Jamieson, Alexander Allan, and James Hay, were appointed a committee to prepare an act in accordance with the terms of it: but with regard to the second part, there was a diversity of opinion. Some proposed that instead of delaying, they should lay aside this part of the overture altogether. This gave rise to another discussion, and the question being put, "Delay, or, Lay aside," it carried, by a considerable majority, "Delay." Eight ministers and four elders craved to have it marked, that they had voted "Lay aside."

It was not till the meeting of Synod, in April 1796, that the committee reported they had completed the task assigned them, and laid upon the table a draft of a "Narrative and Testimony," and requested that the Synod would give judgment concerning it, at an early period. After reading the draft, the Synod expressed their satisfaction with the diligence of the committee in preparing it; and they ordered it to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to ministers and sessions for their perusal: they also appointed a meeting to be held on the 11th of October, for the special purpose of taking this document into consideration. The overture of the Glasgow presbytery, concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, was now completely superseded, as the sentiments of the overture were embodied in the new Testimony.

When the Synod met in October, after considerable time spent in conversing about the draft which their committee had prepared, the following question was put to the vote,



“Are the Synod so far satisfied with the plan of the present overture, as to proceed to read and further judge of the contents of it, or not?” when it was carried in the affirmative. Messrs Bruce and Ramsay craved that it might be marked, “that they had not clearness to concur in the vote as stated,”—and they reserved to themselves the power of giving such a declaration of their sentiments afterwards, as they might judge proper.

It was no trivial business in which the Synod now engaged, when they entered upon the review of a document consisting of two hundred octavo pages, and including all the controversial points in divinity and church-government, which had been discussed in this country for successive generations. To review such a document, paragraph by paragraph, and to sit in judgment on the sentiments contained in each, was indeed a work of great labour, and it was not without reason that they termed it “a weighty work.” My readers will not wonder, when they are informed that the Synod were engaged in this work for a period of nearly eight years. They commenced their review in the month of October 1796, and they did not complete it till May 1804. There was scarcely a meeting of Synod held, during the course of these years, at which there were not several sederunts spent in considering the Narrative and Testimony.

But during the same period, there were other official documents, the revision of which occupied their attention. The *Acknowledgment of Sins* and the *Engagement to Duties* were not considered sufficiently suited to the “present circumstances of the church,” and a committee was appointed to prepare an overture on the subject. The *Acknowledgment* contained a summary account of the defections and errors that had prevailed in the different sections of the church, since the period of the Reformation, and an expression of sorrow that such should have been permitted to exist. This paper was read over on occasions of covenanting, and all persons entering into covenant were considered as solemnly assenting to the statements which it contained. The *Engagement*

to *Duties* or *Profession of Faith* (as it was also called), was appended to the *Acknowledgment*, and contained a declaration of what the covenanters engaged or professed to do. This constituted, properly speaking, the *Bond* which they were required to swear and subscribe. Those who had publicly assented to the *Acknowledgment of Sins*, and who had solemnly sworn and subscribed the *Engagement to Duties*, were regarded as having performed the duty of public covenanting; they were "joined in the bond." This duty was enjoined as obligatory not merely upon office-bearers and expectants of the ministry, but upon all members of the church.

While the Synod were engaged in moulding their Testimony into a shape better adapted to their existing circumstances, as a church, expunging from it objectionable passages, and making it express, in a more decided tone, their sentiments on the great question of the magistrate's power in matters of religion, it was deemed no less necessary that the *Acknowledgment of Sins* should be reviewed and remodelled, in order to accommodate it also to present circumstances. Accordingly, a draft of a new Acknowledgment was presented by the committee appointed for this purpose, and the Synod spent several sederunts, at successive meetings, in considering it; and at last, after much time and labour had been spent upon the subject, they gave it their formal sanction on the 11th of September, 1799.

In the meantime the Synod made an enactment, declaring it to be allowable for presbyteries to admit on trials for licence those students of divinity, who had finished their course of study, even though they had not "joined in the bond for renewing the covenants," as they could not be expected to do so, while the public documents of the church were undergoing a revision. But such students, before being received on trials, were to declare themselves in presence of the presbytery, to be "the friends of covenanting work, particularly of the religious covenants of our ancestors, and of the duty and seasonableness of public covenanting;"

they were further to “ signify their firm resolution of going on in said work, so soon as the Synod were agreed with regard to an *Acknowledgment of Sins* and an *Engagement to Duties* more suited to the present circumstances of the church.” Mr Bruce protested against this enactment, for reasons to be afterwards assigned ; and Mr Aitken adhered to his protest

At next meeting of Synod, Mr Bruce presented the following declaration, that it might be entered on the record :—  
“ That some appear to have considered the overture (of the Testimony), while under review, as exhibiting the public and authentic declaration of the principles of this Synod, at least so far as the review has proceeded, and as suspending or invalidating former acts, wherein these principles were judicially declared ; and this seems to receive countenance from a deed of last meeting of Synod, suspending progress in covenanting, because some things in the Testimony and Acknowledgment of Sins are presently under consideration : He therefore craves to have it marked, that his continuing to concur in revising the overture is not to be constructed as admitting this view ; but that he proceeds in this, or in considering hereafter any new overture for an Acknowledgment of Sins, upon the supposition that our principles, and the acts explaining them, remain in force in the meantime ; that we may not violate the rule of the apostle, ‘ Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.’ ”

When the Synod adopted (11th September, 1799), the new Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, they agreed that a clause should be inserted in the second question of the formula, the purport of which was, that the assent given by ministers, probationers, and elders, to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and of other standard books, was to be understood as qualified by the declaration of Synod given in May 1796,\* and renewed in September 1799. Messrs George Whytock and John Smith craved that it might be marked, that they did not acquiesce in this mea-

\* See pp. 46-48 of this volume.



sure ; and against these proceedings of the Synod Mr Bruce protested in the following terms :—

“ I, Archibald Bruce, though cordially approving of the duty of public covenanting and of covenant renovation, as enacted and practised in the Secession, and not averse from a deliberate review of the former Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond, or a farther and proper accommodation of them to present times and circumstances, yet find myself obliged to protest, and I hereby do protest, in my own name and in name of all the ministers or people in the Associate Body, who may reckon it their duty to adhere, against this present act of Synod, so far as it enjoins a new Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties, inconsistent with and derogatory with those formerly enacted and solemnly recognised among us, or with our declared principles ; particularly as tending to introduce in a rash and subdolous manner, and to mingle in these solemn exercises, a new sectarian scheme, in reference to public reformation and covenants ; and for other reasons that may be stated and more fully illustrated hereafter.

“ I, in like manner, renew my protestation formerly taken against the general and unfair manner in which some part of the doctrine of the Confession of Faith was virtually dropped and condemned, and the change of our formula and profession that ensued, which vague exception or condemnation is now judicially extended, and to be applied to every thing relating to the same subject in other standard books or papers hitherto assented to among us. I also renew the protestation taken last year against the deed of Synod, allowing young men to be licensed and ordained, in a way of dispensing with the former terms required of them in regard to covenanting, for the reasons already given in, though not yet read or answered by this court ; and must consequently hold the procedure that hath followed thereon, in this and in the inferior judicatories, as irregular and unconstitutional. I farther protest that none of these deeds can be held obligatory on me, nor ought to be so on any belonging to this Synod, against any

former vows they have come under to God, or against formerly established terms of ministerial or christian communion in the Associate Body; nor ought they to hinder a continued adherence to the standards of the reformed Church of Scotland, or the Secession Testimony, or any article of our solemn covenants, as formerly renewed and sworn among us; nor yet to stop procedure in the mean time in covenanting, agreeably to the principles and plan formerly adopted, either in the same form of words, or in a form with alterations not liable to the same objections, as the Lord may lead forward therein.

“And I farther declare, that communion with my brethren henceforth, unless I obtain other light, can only be maintained according to the tenor of this protestation, and upon the ancient terms and bonds of our religious association, and not on the footing of these late innovating acts.”

Mr Aitken gave in a paper, at next meeting of Synod (April, 1800), adhering to Mr Bruce's protest, with the following explanation, viz. “That as I did not signify my adherence to Mr Bruce's protest formerly taken against the act of Synod, in reference to a certain part of the doctrine taught in the 23d chapter of our Confession of Faith, at the time said protest was taken, on account of a former dissent by me in that cause, I now see it to be my duty to remonstrate;—Likeas I hereby do remonstrate against the fore-said act of Synod, and petition that the Synod will review the same.”

Mr M'Crie of Edinburgh also presented a representation and petition, craving that the Synod would review their deed of 1796, respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion.\* Remonstrances on the same subject

\* It is rather singular, that the sentiments of Mr M'Crie should have undergone such a rapid change, with regard to the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. In 1796, he refused to submit to ordination, until the Synod gave relief to his conscience, by passing an act, declaring that they disapproved of “*every thing* in the Confession of Faith, which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects, on account of their religious opinions and observances.” In 1800, he petitioned that this act should be reviewed and rescinded.

were afterwards presented from the session of Whitburn (Mr Bruce's), from a number of people belonging to that congregation, and from the session of Kirriemuir. Mr Bruce, desirous to arrest the progress of the Synod in the work in which they were engaged, brought forward (5th September, 1800) a motion to the following effect:—  
“Whereas an overture, under the title of a Testimony, &c. hath for a considerable time been under the consideration of Synod, for terminating our deliberations on this subject, it is moved, that in regard we have already an Act, Declaration, and Testimony, judicially authorised among us, in which, in connexion with posterior acts, the principles of the associate body are explicitly stated and declared; and as the committee who compiled and introduced this overture, in the form of a Testimony, on a plan entirely new—the use of which, if enacted as proposed, would tend to supersede the use and authority of the former Testimony, and of other papers, as hitherto received among us—acted in so far without warrant from the Synod; therefore the Synod agree to dismiss the further consideration of it in that form, or with the foresaid view: But in regard the overture contains a statement and assertion of many scriptural and seasonable truths against a number of prevailing errors, the publication of which may be useful at this time, the Synod appoint that so many chapters of this overture as treat upon the doctrines and principles of faith and religion, commonly received among us, and which, in the review, have been unanimously approved of, be immediately referred to the committee for publication.”

This motion of Mr Bruce was rejected, only three persons (exclusive of himself) having voted for it, viz. Messrs Aitken, M'Crie, and Dun. That portion of the overture, the review of which had been finished, was ordered to be printed, and copies of it to be sent to ministers and elders, for their perusal. In October, 1801, the Synod, having completed their review of that part of the overture called the Testimony, agreed that it should be enacted and pub-



lished, so that the people under their inspection might have an opportunity of perusing it ; but at the same time they declared, that it should not be made a term of communion amongst them, until they had also finished their review of the Narrative. Protests and remonstrances were made against this decision by Messrs Bruce, Hog, M'Crie, and Whytock. Mr Chalmers, who was not present at this meeting, craved leave, at the next, to remonstrate against it also. The Synod did not consider that he had any right to have his remonstrance read, but they granted it as a matter of indulgence. Papers containing reasons of protest were presented by all the remonstrants. The general tenor of these papers was the same. Mr Whytock concluded his remonstrance in the following terms, and the sentiments which he expressed were the sentiments of the whole :—" The subscriber remonstrates against this act, and protests that the Synod shall set aside or review and correct it, that it may correspond, in matter and design, with the Testimony already on the field, and particularly with the act of the Associate Presbytery for renewing the covenants : And further protests, that his continuing to hold communion with this Synod, so long as he can find it practicable, shall be considered as proceeding only upon the original grounds, upon which he was originally admitted to be a member of it, and in the way of disclaiming this act, so far as contrary thereunto ; and, in a word, that his concurring in admitting persons to communion, shall, as formerly, be in the way of receiving their adherence to the judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the Associate Presbytery, aye and until a Testimony more correspondent to it than this, in matter and spirit, shall be substituted in its place." A committee was appointed to prepare answers to the reasons of protest given in by the remonstrants ; and when the answers were read, they were approved of as satisfactory.

In September, 1803, the Synod, having finished their revision of the Narrative, enacted it, as they had previously done the Testimony ; and they also gave their sanction to

an Introduction which had been prepared by a committee. The whole overture, including Introduction, Narrative, and Testimony, was then ordered to be published for the perusal of the people, with the following note prefixed :—" The Synod, having enacted the subsequent papers, have agreed that they will consider, against next meeting, of adopting the Testimony, as that to which accessions will be given by those who propose to join our connexion, agreeably to what is expressed in the Introduction." A formal protestation, subscribed by Messrs Whytock, Aitken, and M'Crie, was laid upon the table, against these decisions.

Mr Chalmers, who was prevented by indisposition from attending, when the Synod were engaged in reviewing and correcting the Introduction and Narrative, craved (in a written communication) that as he was unacquainted with the precise state of the overture as now enacted, " the door might be left open to him to declare his sentiments, and exoner himself respecting it, after he shall have had an opportunity of giving it a deliberate perusal." Mr Bruce, whose absence was occasioned by his official labour as Professor of Divinity, sent a letter, the following extract from which he required to be inserted in the Synod's record :—" If a decision, such as has been feared, shall be gone into, I desire to have it represented, that as I adhere to former regular steps taken in Synod to prevent such a decision, and to any similar steps that may be found necessary to be taken by brethren in support of our former principles and terms of fellowship ; so I must consider myself as to be entitled to full liberty to exoner myself as to any such deeds at this time, at a posterior meeting of Synod, if in providence I shall have an opportunity of attending."

When the Synod met in April, 1804, Mr Hog, who had not been present at the last meeting, offered to adhere to the protest taken by Messrs Whytock, Aitken, and M'Crie, against the deed of Synod, enacting the Narrative and Introduction. Though Mr Hog had not tendered any excuse for his absence from the meeting in September, yet the Sy-

nod so far indulged him, as to permit his protest to be recorded. Mr Chalmers declared his adherence to the same protest. These five brethren thought proper to “exoner” their consciences still further at this meeting, by presenting an additional paper of remonstrance, which concluded in the following terms:—“But if the Synod will hearken to no remonstrance on this subject, the subscribers again protest, that they shall be justified in holding by our former terms of communion, proceeding in admissions in the same way as formerly, and that they shall be at liberty to use all means necessary and competent for maintaining and vindicating the principles of the Secession, as originally stated.” A committee was appointed to take this paper into consideration, and also to converse with the remonstrants. This committee reported, that some of the scruples of their brethren had been removed, but that others still remained.

The Synod then took into consideration a paper of corrections and additions, which it was proposed to make to the Narrative and Testimony, with the view of obviating the objections of the remonstrants. After several sittings had been spent in considering these corrections and additions, they were adopted; but the adopting of them only gave occasion to the recording of another dissent. Messrs Whytock and M’Crie craved to have it marked, that the grounds of their protest, so far from being removed, were rather confirmed, by the corrections which had now been adopted; and they desired, as usual, that “the door might be left open to them” to state their mind farther on the subject, as they might see cause, in the future progress of the business.

This tedious and laborious work of revising the Testimony, in which the Synod had now been engaged for several years, was at last brought to a close on the 2d of May, 1804, by the adopting of the following motion:—“The Synod agree to adopt the Introduction, Narrative, and Testimony, as now corrected and enlarged, as the term of admission for those who shall apply for joining in communion with



us, with the limitations stated in the Introduction ; to be acted upon, after the people have had due time to acquaint themselves with these deeds : And that the Synod further agree, that all due tenderness be exercised to those who are already in communion with them, whether ministers or people, who may have scruples as to some things contained in them." When this motion was adopted, Messrs Whytock, Aitken, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie, declared that they adhered to their former protestation, and reserved to themselves the liberty of making farther opposition to this and former deeds, should they judge it necessary.

There were various considerations that influenced the General Associate Synod, in thus remodelling their Testimony. One of these was a desire to simplify. The distinguishing principles of the Secession Church had hitherto been scattered throughout a number of official publications ; such as the Judicial Act and Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, the Act for Renewing the Covenants, the Answers to Mr Nairn's Reasons of Dissent, with the Declaration appended, and other acts of the Associate Presbytery and Synod. It was not to be supposed that all those who were in the communion of the Secession, could have either opportunity or capacity to peruse these documents with understanding ; and the Synod, therefore, found it expedient, according to their own declaration, " to collect the substance of them all into a plain and comprehensive summary, which persons in ordinary circumstances, and of ordinary capacity, may both read and understand." Another consideration which influenced them in this matter, was a desire to extend their Testimony, so as to bring it down to the present period. Various things had occurred, since the commencement of the Secession, which rendered this, in their opinion, necessary. The corruptions of the Established Church had increased, and other denominations of professing christians had sprung up around them, of whose principles they did not approve, and against whom they considered it their duty to testify. Still further, the phraseology

of the original Testimony, on certain points, was not considered sufficiently explicit, or rather it conveyed a meaning different from that which was held by the great majority of the Synod ; and it was therefore deemed necessary, that the language employed should be less ambiguous, and more in accordance with the sentiments of those whose opinions it was intended to express.

With regard to the sense in which the adopting of the new Testimony was to be regarded as a term of admission to their communion, the Synod made the following declaration:—" In the former Testimony, the declaration of our principles is intermixed with much historical narration. This has given some persons occasion to think that we required every Seceder to vouch for the truth of all such narration, which very few could be in a capacity to do. As no such thing was ever required or expected, in order to obviate this mistake, the Synod have now separated the Narrative from the doctrinal Testimony. The Narrative being enacted by this Synod, as well as what is properly called the Testimony, is to be considered as a part of the Synod's Judicial Testimony. It will be expected, that every person who shall henceforth be admitted to our communion, should read the Narrative, in order to his having a proper understanding of the Testimony : And though such an adherence to the Narrative, as includes a vouching for the truth of facts, will not be required ; yet no person will be admitted to communion with us, who formally condemns the attainments in reformation of which the Synod approve ; or approves of those steps of defection which the Synod condemn. Nor will any be admitted who does not express an adherence to the doctrines contained in the Testimony itself."

This Testimony, on which so much time and attention had been expended by the Synod, is, upon the whole, a business-like production, and the publication of it was fitted to be useful to the people under their charge, both in making them acquainted with their principles, and in enabling them to defend them. There is to be found in it much valuable

information on doctrinal topics, lucidly arranged, and scripturally expressed. It contains also a firm and honest avowal of the sentiments of the Synod upon those debateable questions, which then agitated the church, and which continue to agitate it at the present day. Some of the statements contained in the Introduction, do honour to the manliness and good sense of the Synod, and must command the approbation of every intelligent christian. The sentiments expressed are such as all genuine reformers ought to adopt.

Lest any might suppose that, in the remodelling of their Testimony, they were influenced more by a regard to the opinions of men, than by the word of God, or that they considered themselves bound implicitly to adopt or reject whatever had been adopted or rejected by those good men who had gone before them, they make the following statements : —“ The foundation upon which we rest the whole of our ecclesiastical constitution, is the testimony of God in his word. That main pillar of the Reformation, ‘ that the Bible contains the whole religion of protestants,’ we adopt for our fundamental principle, and build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Though we should be defamed as setting up the reformation attained to betwixt the years 1638 and 1650, as the standard of our church state, we hold every thought of this kind in detestation. We acknowledge *that* to have been a period of eminent ecclesiastical purity ; but we call no man nor church, Master. One is our Master, even Christ, and his word is our only unerring rule. ‘ To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ ” \*

With regard to what has usually been termed the *First* and *Second Reformations*,—the one from popery, and the other from prelacy,—they say, “ Our declaring an adherence to these Reformations, and particularly to the latter, as comprehending in it all the valuable attainments of the former,

\* Narrative and Testimony, enacted by the General Associate Synod in 1804. P. 9.



does not imply our approbation of all the measures adopted in the prosecution of either. Some of the measures that have been adopted in the prosecution of the last, that have been considered by many as most exceptionable, we do not hesitate to approve; such as their meeting together to concert measures for getting rid of public evils, even when their meetings for that purpose were forbidden by orders from court; their defending themselves by arms, when unjustly attacked by their enemies; their pledging themselves to cleave to one another in the prosecution of the cause in which they were engaged, and using means for securing to themselves the quiet possession of their christian privileges. We do not vindicate the embodying the matter of their religious profession with the laws of the country, and giving it the formal sanction of civil authority. It is not, however, to the imperfect managements of men, that we declare our adherence, but to the Reformation itself." \*

In reference to the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, they declare, "That, in our adherence to them, we are not to be viewed as adopting a rule of faith, distinct from the Holy Scriptures. Though we acknowledge these as subordinate standards, they are not at all the rule of what we are bound to believe, but a public declaration of what we do believe; and believe, because revealed to us in the word of God. By this word they are themselves to be tried and judged. The reason why we use them, and avow our adherence to them, is, that we may give public testimony of our soundness in the faith, and thereby distinguish ourselves from those who pervert the Scriptures, by glosses contrary to their genuine meaning." They further declare, "That, as no human composure, however excellent and well expressed, can be supposed to contain a full and comprehensive view of divine truth; so, by this adherence, we are not precluded from embracing, upon due deliberation, any further light which may afterward arise from the word of God, about any article of divine truth." †

\* Narrative, &c. P. 10.

† Ibid. Pp. 12, 13.

In their new Testimony, the Synod took very decided ground with regard to the interference of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. They condemned, in explicit terms, the connexion betwixt church and state. The language which they employed on this subject, was similar to that which has since been rendered more familiar to the public by the Voluntary Church controversy. The following passages, extracted from their publication, will show the clear and enlightened views which they entertain on this question; the sentiments which they express, are in accordance with the dictates of revelation and of sound reason.

In drawing the line of distinction betwixt church and state, they declare,—“ 1. That the church is a spiritual kingdom. Her members, as such, are considered as spiritual persons. The same character belongs to her doctrines, ordinances, and office-bearers. But the kingdoms of this world are secular and earthly societies; the members of which, as such, are considered as capable of performing the duties, and of enjoying the privileges, belonging to a civil state. The power of the church is wholly spiritual, and is exercised by her office-bearers, in its whole extent, solely with respect to the spiritual interests of men, and in no other name but that of Christ. But the power competent to worldly kingdoms is wholly temporal, respecting only the temporal interests of society. Their rulers can have no spiritual power, because this cannot reside in a civil body, and therefore cannot be communicated to them by those who have entrusted them with power. The rulers of the church are bound to publish and execute the laws given her by Christ; but have no right to make new laws, or in the least to deviate from his. But civil society may choose what form of government, and may make what civil laws they please, if they do nothing contrary to the eternal law of righteousness, which is the rule of civil society, as such. The glory of God, in the salvation of elect sinners, is the end of the erection of the church, and of all her doctrines and ordinances. The end of civil government, in subordi-

nation to the divine glory, is the public and temporal good of civil society.

“ 2. That neither of these kingdoms hath power over the other. The church hath a spiritual authority over such of the subjects and rulers of earthly kingdoms, as are in her communion; and the civil powers have the same authority over the members and office-bearers of the church, as over the rest of their subjects. But she hath no power over earthly kingdoms, in their collective and civil capacity; nor have they any power over her as a church. Christ, her Head, while on earth, disclaimed all exercise of civil authority; and there is not the least evidence from the New Testament, that he entrusted his servants with any. So far from this, it is given as the character of the *Man of Sin*, that he should arrogate authority over earthly kingdoms. On the other hand, neither these kingdoms, nor their sovereigns, have any power in or over the church. Christ, her only sovereign, hath neither directly nor indirectly, given them any spiritual authority. The christian religion lays every one who professes it, under the strongest obligations to the faithful discharge of the duties of his station. But it annexes no new powers to any office or relation founded in nature; therefore, christian magistrates have no power to give laws to the church; to appoint her office-bearers, or dictate to them in the discharge of their office; to prescribe a confession of faith, or form of worship, to the church, or their subjects in general; authoritatively to call meetings of church judicatories, in ordinary cases, or to direct or control them in their judicial procedure. In matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to judge for any but themselves.”\*

On the subject of public religious covenanting, the Synod thus express themselves:—“ That public religious covenanting is the deed of a number of church members, in which they jointly and publicly profess to renounce all hope of life

\* Narrative and Testimony, enacted by the General Associate Synod, in 1804, p. 193.



from the covenant of works ; to take hold of the covenant of grace, and to devote themselves to the Lord ; and, in the strength of promised grace, engage faithfully to cleave to him, to hold fast his truth, to perform the various duties which they owe to God and man, in their respective stations and relations, and to strengthen one another's hands in the work of the Lord. Although an oath be not essential to the performance of this duty, it is generally most proper to accompany it. Those who entered into covenant under the Old Testament, frequently attested the sincerity of their profession by an oath. When this is foretold as a duty to be performed in New Testament times, it is in different places called *swearing*. The solemnity of an oath seems peculiarly proper, when the truth is violently opposed. In this case, especially, it is highly reasonable that we should attest our allegiance to the King of Zion, with as much solemnity as is required by earthly kings ; and that we should seal *our* confession to the *Amen, the faithful and true witness*, in the same manner in which he sealed his."

They then acknowledge the continued obligation of the covenants " of our reforming ancestors," upon persons of all ranks in these lands, and their posterity. They also acknowledge the obligation of the Engagement to Duties come under in the Secession Church ; after which they make the following remarks on the Solemn League and Covenant :—" Is it objected that the Solemn League and Covenant was enjoined under civil pains ? We grant that it was. But this was in a great measure the consequence of civil and religious matters being joined together in the same oath. How far those in power acted properly, in enforcing the civil matters contained in it with civil pains, we do not reckon it incumbent on us to determine ; but we are ready to acknowledge, that, if matters purely religious were enforced by such pains, it was unwarrantable. As the Synod are still of the same judgment with the Associate Presbytery, that the Solemn League and Covenant was '*for the matter just and warrantable for the ends necessary and commendable, and for the*

*time seasonable;*’ therefore the Synod, in acknowledging the obligation of the covenants of our ancestors, make no exception as to any part of their matter, according to the limitations expressed in the Narrative and Testimony, though they do not consider every thing in them as so particularly applicable to every period, or to our present circumstances.

“ It has been objected, that, in the Solemn League, they swore that they should, ‘ *without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, and whatsoever should be found contrary to sound doctrine?*’ But, as the evils enumerated, and not persons, are represented as the objects of extirpation, or *rooting out*, by our covenanting ancestors; whatever means any person, either in former or present times, might think themselves bound by the covenant to employ for the extirpation of these evils, yet we, in adhering to the religious reformation, engaged to in this covenant, utterly disclaim all obligation to use any methods inconsistent with liberty of conscience in prosecuting the ends of it.”\*

After the Synod had completed the revision of their Narrative and Testimony, they passed an act declaring that all ministers, preachers, students, elders, and others, who had not yet covenanted, should “ join in the bond,” agreeably to the tenor of the New Testimony; and they appointed a special meeting of the Synod to be held for that purpose in the month of May, 1805;† they also recommended to all the ministers connected with the Synod, to turn the attention of their people to “ the ordinance of public covenanting,” by preaching on the subject; and to inculcate upon them the obligation under which they lay, to embrace the earliest opportunity of joining in that work. They further revised the Formula of Questions put to ministers and elders, at their ordination, and to preachers when receiving licence; and they made such alterations in it, as were rendered necessary by the improvements made in their Testimony.

\* Testimony, p. 159.

† The proceedings that took place at this meeting, have been noticed above. See p. 99.

Against these proceedings Messrs Whytock, Aitken, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie entered their protest in the following terms:—"The subscribers find it necessary to protest, in their own name, and in the name of all their brethren who may adhere to them, against the deed of Synod, agreeing to, and enacting the overture about covenanting; because said deed proceeds upon the doctrine about covenanting, laid down in the new Testimony already protested against; because it does not correspond with the renovation of our solemn covenants, agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery; and because it appears to them to lead to engagements different from, if not contrary to, those we have already come under,—craving liberty to illustrate and enlarge these reasons, and to add others, according as they may find necessary, upon perusing the deed, when put into their hands, protesting that they shall not be considered as bound to take part in the execution of this deed, or to conform to the injunctions and directions which it contains. They also protest against the deed now passed appointing various alterations in the Formula, for the purpose of its being accommodated to the acts respecting the new Testimony, and the act about covenanting, above mentioned; upon all which, they take instruments, and crave extracts."

At next meeting of Synod, held in May 1805, a paper, containing reasons of protest in a more extended form, was presented by Messrs Whytock, Chalmers, Hog, and M'Crie. The Synod, having formerly appointed a committee to answer the remonstrance which had been given in by these brethren, at a former meeting; and, being satisfied with the answers which their committee had returned, did not consider it necessary to take any particular notice of the paper now presented; but "for the satisfaction and exoneration of the protesting brethren," they agreed to engross their protest in their minutes, "in the way of signifying their disapprobation of various expressions in it, particularly in representing the manner of covenanting by the Synod as opposite and contradictory unto former covenanting in the Se-



cession." At the same time, the Synod declared, " That although these brethren cannot, for the time, see it to be their duty actively to concur in covenanting, agreeably to the Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond adopted by the Synod, or to concur in licensing preachers, or in ordaining ministers, according to the present Formula ; yet the Synod cannot admit procedure in covenanting, but on the footing of the Acknowledgment of Sins and Bond adopted by them, or allow any formula to be used but that agreed upon by the Synod ; and the Synod expect that, in the event of their brethren's protestation being admitted into the records of court, they will not, either from the pulpit or from the press, impugn or oppose our principles, as stated by the Synod ; and, as the Synod have not prohibited our brethren from receiving into communion persons who may better understand or approve of the former statement of our principles ; so, on the other hand, the Synod expect that our brethren shall not refuse to admit to communion such persons as have read and approve of our principles, as the Synod have now stated them ; and, in fine, that our brethren conduct themselves, as they have done hitherto, in attending church courts, and assisting their brethren on sacramental occasions, that the edification of the body may not be marred, but the peace and unity of the church promoted."

These brethren considered this declaration of Synod an infringement of their ministerial liberty ; and they were under the necessity of again " exonerating " their consciences, by having recourse to another protestation, the purport of which was, " We find ourselves under the necessity of declaring, that we disclaim any acknowledgment of holding or exercising our ministry upon such new injunctions and rules, while we are resolved to discharge it as the Lord may direct, with faithfulness and prudence, according to former engagements." To this paper were appended the names of Messrs Whytock, Chalmers, and M'Crie.

Mr Bruce, at this meeting, presented a remonstrance and protest, on his own account, in which he declared, that if the

Synod did not review and disannul their late deeds, he would be under the necessity of withdrawing from their communion. His paper concluded in the following terms:—  
“ Upon the whole, the remonstrant thinks it high time that he, and others in a similar situation, should know how communion at present stands, or may hereafter stand, between the reverend Synod and them, while they retain their present views, and find themselves obliged to act according to them. According to the import, and even the express letter of these new terms, he cannot but consider himself as really precluded from taking any active share in judicial procedure, or public ministrations, wherein these take effect, and while they stand in force. He expected to live and die in cordial union with his brethren, whom he loves, as well as in adherence to the profession that was the choice of his judgment, which must, however, be preferred to all that is dear on earth. But, in order that wonted fellowship may be continued, and the peace and unity of the body maintained in consistency with truth and a good conscience, he thinks himself entitled to demand, as he hereby in his own name, and in the name of other remonstrants who may see meet to adhere, and in the name of all others disposed to adhere to the former principles and engagements, doth demand that the acts imposing these new terms be speedily reversed, and that other grievances be taken into serious consideration, and in due time redressed; declaring and protesting, in like manner, that, till this requisition be granted, he must consider himself and them as actually expelled from their wonted communion with this Synod, or the present prevailing party in it, merely for their consistent adherence, so far as enabled, to their former profession and vows; and that, being reluctantly obliged to give way to this, he, and others who may concur, shall in the mean time have a right, as they have a proper call, to the full exercise of any part of ministerial office or duty, individually or jointly, in the support of the public cause, according to the word of God, and presbyterian principles, disclaiming all purpose of encouraging schism and

strife, or of increasing the lamentable divisions in the land ; and he further protests, that he or they ought to be free from any restraint or hindrance from the operation of these acts, or by virtue of any power unconstitutionally claimed, or that may be exercised over him or them in so doing, by this General Synod, or any inferior judicatories, as acting according to the new system, and laws now adopted, in opposition to all remonstrances to the contrary, in reference to which system, no subjection was ever promised or due ; while dutiful subordination, as limited in ordination vows, is not disclaimed, nor will be refused, upon their removing these bars they have raised. Nor shall communion be refused with any brethren or church-members, who may be willing to continue it upon former grounds, and as stated in late protestations, though they may not be of the same mind as to many points of difference, or clear as yet about the course or measures proper to be pursued."

Mr Aitken declared that he adhered to the concluding part of this protest ; and, at the following meeting, Messrs Hog and M'Crie declared their adherence to it also. A committee was appointed to prepare answers to the reasons contained in the remonstrance ; and, when the committee gave in their report, the Synod sustained the answers as sufficient to take off the force of the reasons, though they did not approve of every sentiment or mode of expression employed by the committee. Notwithstanding these answers, the scruples of the protesting brethren remained unshaken. Nothing less than a total reversal of the deeds complained of, would satisfy them ; and, as there was little or no probability that the Synod would adopt any such measure, and thus nullify, by a single act, what it had cost them the labour of several years to accomplish, so these brethren now formed the resolution of withdrawing from the communion of the Synod, and constituting themselves into a separate society. Accordingly, on the 7th of May, 1806, they presented the following paper, containing a virtual declinature of the Sy-



nod's authority ; and, after having presented it, they never again took their seat in the Synod :—

“ We the subscribers do protest, in our own name, and in name of all who may see meet to adhere, against these deeds, as now made final, and that every one of us shall be free from the operation of these acts, and from all obligation of being responsible to this, or inferior judicatories, from acting in opposition to them, so far as they are inconsistent with our former profession and engagements, holding any power that may be claimed or exercised by this Synod, for compelling us to conformity to these new principles and constitution, as unwarrantable, and that we shall account any censure that may be inflicted on us, or on any adhering to us, of such a tendency, or for restraining or hindering us in the discharge of any duty or office we may have a call to perform, individually or conjunctly, in maintaining our common profession, or fulfilling our solemn engagements. We protest we must hold our right to the exercise of ministerial and judicial powers full and entire, whether we shall see it expedient to avail ourselves of the right protested for or not, in our state of separation and exclusion from present communion with the prevailing party in this Synod, in their present course, into which, to our grief, we are reluctantly driven ; which suspension of wonted fellowship in the Lord, and in the truth, we hope and pray may be but temporary and short. We renew the declaration made last year against any intention or course that may increase lamentable divisions, or promote any schismatical separation from the reformed and covenanted church of Scotland, the original Secession Testimony, or the Associate Synod, in adherence to it. The multiplication of sects and schisms we consider as among the prevailing evils of the age, against which we have solemnly avowed, as well as against other evils ; and it is one great reason for our not concurring with our brethren in this new scheme, that it is of a schismatical tendency, and inconsistent with the promoting of a covenanted conjunction and uniformity. We shall endeavour to have the great end of

an union among evangelical ministers and christians in view, and will be ready to encourage correspondence with any belonging to this Synod, or other denominations, who still profess regard to the Westminster standards of uniformity, and presbyterian principles, with a view to have subsisting differences removed in a scriptural manner.

“ In the mean time, we think we have reason to complain, that our brethren, with whom we have been joined in close and comfortable communion, have, on their part, broken the brotherly covenant, and laid a great bar in the way of promoting such a desirable union and uniformity ; and we would remind them of the clause of the oath they had sworn, never to give themselves to indifference or lukewarmness, in the public cause, but encourage one another in prosecuting the end of their solemn covenant.

“ And we leave the consequences of these our contendings and desires to Him who has the disposal of all events, who sits above the floods, and who often hath stretched out his glorious arm in these isles of the sea, in behalf of the cause of reformation, for which we have all been professing to appear, and who hath said, ‘ Now will I arise, now will I be exalted, now will I lift up myself, when he seeth their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left.’ May he speedily arise, and have mercy upon Zion.

“ ARCHD. BRUCE, minister at Whitburn.

“ JAMES AITKEN, minister at Kirriemuir.

“ JAMES HOG, minister at Kelso.

“ THOS. M'CRIE, minister at Edinburgh.”\*

The Synod delayed the consideration of this paper till their meeting in August ; and a complaint being made, that these brethren refused to give attestations to such of their people, as were desirous to join in communion with the

\* Mr Whytock, minister at Dalkeith, who had co-operated with these four brethren in their opposition to the Synod, was now dead ; he died on the 24th of October, 1805.

neighbouring congregations, the Synod gave directions that these people be admitted on being certified by their elders, or by other members of the church residing in their neighbourhood. A complaint was at the same time preferred against Mr Aitken of Kirriemuir, by some of his elders, and others, that he and his session had materially declined subordination to the Synod, on the ground of the Synod's "public received principles." The Synod had not time to enter upon the consideration of this complaint; but they agreed that it should lie upon their table till their next meeting; and Mr Aitken and his elder (the representative of the session), were cited, *apud acta*, to attend.

The four protesting brethren did not wait for the decision of the Synod on their declaration, presented on the 7th of May. But when the Synod met at Glasgow on the 26th of August (1806), these brethren met at Whitburn on the same day; and after two days spent in conference and prayer, they constituted themselves into a presbytery, under the designation of the *Constitutional Associate Presbytery*. Mr Bruce presided as moderator on the occasion, and Mr M'Crie was appointed to officiate as clerk. The reasons assigned by them for taking this step, were the same as those which had already been reiterated in their remonstrances and protests. In their "Deed of Constitution," which was afterwards published, they bewail the defection of the Synod in adopting a new Testimony and declaration of principles, in altering the Bond for public covenanting, and in sanctioning a new Formula of questions for entrants into office;—"by which deed," they say, "some important doctrines in the Confession of Faith, and different articles in their Testimony and principles formerly subscribed, are renounced and dropped, and opposite sectarian errors introduced." What were the important doctrines, which the Synod "renounced and dropped," and what the "opposite sectarian errors," which they introduced, they are not pleased to specify. But the chief burden of their lamentation lies in the following passage:—"Particularly, the duty and warrantableness of civil rulers



employing their authority in an active support of the interests of religion and the kingdom of Christ, and in promoting reformation (which was an eminent part of the testimony and contendings of the Church of Scotland, in behalf of the reformation of our native land, civil and ecclesiastic, explicitly approved in the Secession), are by the new deeds denied and set aside ; as also, that all covenants of a religious nature, entered into by nations, in their public capacity, or in conjunction with churches, and in so far the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, in their proper import, matter, and form, as well as in the manner of ratifying and enjoining them, are either directly or by native consequences condemned."

In this document, they find and declare, that the General Associate Synod, and inferior judicatories concurring with it, can no longer be acknowledged as faithful, or rightly constituted courts of Christ, and that they can take no share with them in the exercise of government and discipline : it is therefore " warrantable and needful for them to associate together, not only for the administration of the word and sacraments, and for occasional consultations, but also for the regular exercise of government and discipline, as providence may give them an opportunity." They further modestly affirm, that " their acting in this capacity appears to be no less needful for the support of the public cause, for which they are contending, as otherwise the reformation testimony, in various articles of it, for the maintenance of which the associate judicatories were first constituted, would be in great danger of being dropped and lost for the present in the Associate Body." They also declare, that " though there are some other bodies of presbyterians in this land who profess adherence to the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards, and who may be in the main hearty friends to the reformation testimony, and to those articles which are now in a special manner attacked ; yet, as there are none

with whom, according to the known state of their public profession, they have freedom presently to form a junction, they reckon themselves shut up to the necessity of meeting apart; waiting for the time of healing, if haply some bars and offences subsisting among the remaining friends of evangelical truth, and the evangelical interest, may be removed." Further, they adduce their "ordination vows" in vindication of the step which they were now taking. They say, that "by these they acknowledged presbyterian church government and discipline to be of divine institution, and promised 'never to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof, but that they would, to the utmost of their power, in their station, during all the days of their life, maintain, support, and defend the same against every other form of government;' which they could not be said to do, if they were to continue in a practical neglect of it, especially at a time when independency, in various shapes, so greatly prevails in this land."

Finally, "in maintaining the public testimony for the interest of Christ, and a dispensation of all his ordinances in conformity to this," they aver that "a regard must be had to the time to come." "As those who are now engaged in contending for truth may soon finish their course, it is incumbent on them to consider to whom the same trust may be committed, and how provision is to be made for those who are, or may be destitute of the dispensation of public ordinances, agreeably to the Testimony which they have espoused, and to which they can submit with a good conscience. Although they have not hitherto intended, nor have yet resolved to send supply of sermon to those who, in different places, have signified their resolution to adhere to their profession; yet if they should find themselves called to this, and if the Lord see meet to prosper their present attempt, and excite young men, of a faithful and zealous spirit, to offer themselves willingly for the public service of Christ and his scattered flock, they may, by the step, which they are now taking, be in a situation to carry into execution the apostolic charge,

‘ The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men ; who shall be able to teach others also.’ They would think that they had failed in their duty, if they declined a measure conducive to the gaining of that important end.”

Such are the reasons, which the protesting brethren assign in their “ Deed of Constitution,” for renouncing their connexion with the General Associate Synod, and forming themselves into a separate presbytery under the above designation. On the 28th of August, the Synod resumed the consideration of the complaint against Mr Aitken and his session. The presbytery of Forfar, of which Mr Aitken was a member, transmitted a paper on this subject from the session of Dundee, complaining that he had been guilty of various irregularities ; and the presbytery further stated, that they had given Mr Aitken a citation to attend this meeting of Synod. Mr Aitken, having gone to Whitburn to assist his protesting brethren in forming a “ constitutional ” presbytery, left the Synod to do in his cause what they might see proper. Neither he nor his elder obeyed the summons which had been given. The Synod, therefore, were under the necessity of determining the matter in his absence. A long investigation ensued, the result of which was, that the Synod found, that Mr Aitken, and the acting members of his session, had materially declined subordination to the Synod ; that they had not obeyed the *apud acta* summons given by the Synod, nor the citation of the presbytery of Forfar to attend this meeting, nor sent any excuse ; also that Mr Aitken had baptized children to persons of other congregations, who had been excluded from communion, and who were still lying under scandal ; and that he had admitted persons to communion from other congregations, without any regular attestation, and others who were lying under a sentence of suspension by the Synod ; further, that he had proceeded to an ordination of elders, in opposition to a protest by several of the members of his session, and also by a number of the members of his congregation, and that, in said



ordination, he had omitted a principal part of the Formula acknowledged by himself, in not taking those whom he was going to ordain engaged to subjection to any court superior to a session. The Synod considered that all this disorderly conduct was aggravated by their having declared their willingness to continue fellowship with him, as expressed in the act prefixed to the Narrative and Testimony, and in the agreement of Synod, 7th May 1805, in which it is declared, "the Synod have not prohibited our brethren from receiving into communion persons who better understand or approve of the former statement of our principles." On these grounds Mr Aitken was pronounced deserving of the censure of the church; and after mature deliberation, it was agreed to put the question, "Depose, or Suspend?" when it carried by a considerable majority, "Depose." Mr Aitken was accordingly deposed from the office of the holy ministry, in connexion with the Secession Church; and was suspended from all communion in her sealing ordinances. Mr David Black was appointed to preach at Kirriemuir, and to intimate this sentence to the congregation.

At the same meeting, the attention of the Synod was drawn toward the conduct of Messrs Bruce and M'Crie, by a reference from the presbytery of Edinburgh. In this reference the presbytery stated, that these brethren had absented themselves from the meetings of presbytery, without offering any excuse of absence, and when it was known that they were in health and had it in their power to attend; also, that "it was notour," that each of them, since last meeting of Synod, had made a statement to his congregation, containing sentiments in opposition to the principles of the General Synod, and tending to produce schism in the association. They further stated, that they had summoned both of these brethren to attend their meeting, which was held at Edinburgh on the 22d of July, to give an account of their conduct; that the brethren had not obeyed the summons, but had sent letters containing answers to the charges which were preferred against them; And the presbytery, consider-

ing that Messrs Bruce and M'Crie, by not attending their meetings nor obeying their summons, appeared to decline their authority, unanimously agreed to refer the whole matter for decision to the Synod. They gave notice of this reference to these brethren, and summoned them to attend the meeting of Synod.

Along with this reference there was presented a paper from Mr M'Crie's congregation, craving that the Synod would consider in what way that congregation might, "consistent with truth," still enjoy the labours of their minister in connexion with the Synod; and representing "the necessity of a speedy deliverance from their present distracted condition." Another paper was presented from several people belonging to the same congregation, remonstrating against the statement of the Synod's principles contained in the Narrative and Testimony. In connexion with this business, the Synod read the paper which had been laid on their table by the protesting brethren at their meeting in May; and they then adjourned the discussion till their next sederunt.

On the following day (the 29th) they resumed the consideration of these papers; and after long deliberation a motion was made, that Messrs Bruce and M'Crie be suspended from the exercise of their ministry, on the ground that they had given in, at a former meeting, a material declinature of the authority of the Synod, and also that they had been pursuing a divisive course by renouncing communion with their brethren. Another motion was made, that the Synod should delay inflicting any censure at present; and the votes being taken, it carried, "Delay." From this decision five ministers dissented.

But when the Synod met on the 2d of September (being the second week of their meeting), their attention was again called to the conduct of these brethren, by a representation and petition from the elders and members of Mr M'Crie's congregation, which stated, that at a meeting of session called at the close of public worship on the preceding Sabbath, Mr M'Crie had acknowledged that he and the other protest-

ing brethren had met at Whitburn and formed themselves into a presbytery separate from the Synod, and not in subordination to it. This fact was attested by the signature of several elders, who declared that they could hold no communion with said presbytery, that they still adhered to the Synod in the Lord, and they craved advice and support in their present trying situation.\* The Synod having deliberated on this affair, and finding that Mr M'Crie had, according to his own acknowledgment (as attested by these elders), taken a part in forming a presbytery not in connexion with the Synod; taking also into consideration what was recorded concerning him, in their minute of the 29th August, they reversed their former decision, and agreed that they should forthwith inflict censure upon him. The question was put, whether the sentence should be, "Depose" or "Suspend?" and the votes being taken on this question, it carried "Depose." He was accordingly deposed from the office of the holy ministry, and suspended from all communion in the sealing ordinances of the church.

As the Synod had no direct evidence before them concerning Messrs Bruce and Hog, but considered it probable that they were involved in the same charge with Mr M'Crie, they appointed the presbytery of Kelso to summon Mr Hog before them on the last day of September, to answer to the charge of having given in to the Synod, at their last meeting, a virtual declinature of their authority over him, and of having withdrawn from communion, and also of having formed, along with his protesting brethren, a presbytery "separate from and in opposition to the Synod:" And should he not appear and give satisfaction on these points, the presbytery were instructed to depose him from the office of the holy ministry. The presbytery of Edinburgh were

\* The above account of the proceedings in Mr M'Crie's case, is taken from the records of Synod. It is proper, however, to mention, that Mr Bruce, in his "Review" of these proceedings, published some time after, states, in opposition to the account thus given, that "there was no meeting of session, only a few words of conversation between Mr M'Crie and the elders after sermon."



appointed to meet on the first Tuesday of October, and to proceed in a similar manner with Mr Bruce; and a committee of ministers was appointed to meet along with the presbytery, and to correspond with them in the determining of this business. In the mean time, the Synod declared, that it would be improper to entrust Mr Bruce any longer with the superintendence of their theological class, as Professor of Divinity. A committee was appointed to prepare an overture, with a view to improve the system of theological teaching; and until such an overture should be prepared, and considered by the Synod, the presbyteries were enjoined to take the students under their inspection, in their respective districts; to appoint them to deliver two or more discourses before them, and this was to be regarded as equivalent to attending one session at the Divinity Hall.

When the presbytery of Kelso met on the day appointed by the Synod, Mr Hog, though regularly summoned, did not appear, and the presbytery delayed procedure till another meeting. They prepared an address, which they sent to Mr Hog, adverting to the points of difference betwixt them; and at the close of it they certified, that if he did not "retract and submit," they would at next meeting proceed to follow out the instructions of the General Synod. These instructions, however, they did not follow out. Though Mr Hog did not appear at their next meeting, they rested satisfied with merely declaring him highly censurable, and they referred the matter to the Synod, that they might inflict upon him what censure they should judge proper. The reason which they assigned, for not pronouncing a sentence of deposition according to the instructions of the Synod, was "the present destitute condition of their presbytery." When the reference came before the Synod, they found, upon inquiry, that Mr Hog was in a bad state of health, and they delayed, on this account, pronouncing the sentence of deposition; but they prohibited him from the exercise of his ministry, and they appointed the presbytery to give a supply of sermon to his congregation. A short time after this, Mr

Hog was removed from the scene of his labours by death, which terminated all farther proceedings in his case.

Mr Bruce did not obey the summons, given him by the Synod, to appear before the presbytery of Edinburgh, that he might answer to the charges preferred against him. In answer to the summons, he sent a paper of considerable length reflecting upon the conduct of the Synod and presbytery, and declaring his adherence to the protestation and declinature which had already been presented to the Synod. The presbytery found that he had been following "a schismatical and disorderly course in having withdrawn from all ministerial and judicial fellowship with them;" that he had given in a material declinature of the authority of the Synod; that he had been guilty of contumacy in not obeying the summons which had been given him both by the presbytery and the supreme court, and that, inasmuch as he had not given any denial of the charge of his being a member of a presbytery "separate from and in opposition to the Synod," the fact must be considered as admitted by him. On these grounds they deposed him from the office of the holy ministry, and suspended him from all communion with the church in sealing ordinances, "aye and until he should give satisfactory evidences of his repentance." Mr Chalmers, minister at Haddington, who was not present at the formation of the "Constitutional Presbytery," but who afterward became a member of it, had a sentence of deposition pronounced upon him by the Edinburgh presbytery soon after this.

Thus terminated the "contentings" concerning the "Old and New Light" question, in so far as the General Associate Synod was concerned. In the church courts there was now peace; but the controversy still occupied the attention of the public through the medium of the press. The brethren who had been deposed, considered themselves as occupying the honourable position of "witnesses for the truth:" they looked upon themselves as martyrs suffering in a righteous cause; and they were not slow in making the world acquainted, by means of addresses and pamphlets, with their

own merits, and with the grievous wrongs which had been inflicted on them. In an address, which Mr Bruce delivered to his congregation on the Sabbath immediately after his deposition, he favoured them with a narrative of what had taken place. He alluded, in pathetic terms, to the "rash and violent proceedings" of the General Synod at Glasgow, which he characterised as "very different in their spirit and tenor from those of a General Assembly that once met there, so famous in the history of Scotland's Reformation." The former he accused of beating down, "at least indirectly, 'as with axes and hammers,' much of the carved work which the latter were at so much pains and cost then, and afterwards for a series years, to frame and fix." He adverted to the sufferings of his brethren in the following terms:—"For protesting, and for acting conformably to such protestation, among other things, for the honour and revival of that reformation, as carried on and settled by church and state, in their beautiful conjunction, order, and harmony; and for national covenants and leagues in behalf of it, were two faithful and worthy ministers (whose occasional ministrations, I doubt not, have been, and long will be savoury to a number of you in this place, and the more so that they have sealed their doctrinal testimonies by their sufferings), were, I say, before that Synod rose, sentenced, in their absence, to deposition." He then stated the means which had been employed to expel these ministers from their places of worship, that the people adhering to the Synod might retain peaceable possession of them: After which he said with great humility concerning himself, "Amidst such a storm of violence I could not expect to escape; nor did I wish to do so by any evasive acts, or unjustifiable compliances. I might, indeed, have had reason to suspect that I had failed in duty, or had been dishonoured, if I had not, in such a cause, been made a companion of them who are so used."\*

These brethren made a loud outcry against the treatment

\* Appendix to the Review of the proceedings of the General Associate Synod, &c. by Professor Bruce. P. 406.



which they had received from the General Synod, characterising it as in the highest degree tyrannical and unjust. In a "Declaration" which they published soon after the formation of their presbytery, they showed that, whatever wrongs were inflicted on them, they were not inclined to bear them meekly. Though the whole system of revealed religion had been renounced by the Synod, they could scarcely have employed language more strongly condemnatory of the Synod's conduct, than what we find made use of in this "Declaration." Speaking of their separation from the Synod, they say:—"Additional grounds have been given for this, by the violent measures which have been pursued during the course of this year, in attempting to suppress due ministerial freedom, and violating justice, constitutional principles, and presbyterian order, in the processes managed by the associate judicatories, and the censures which they have pretended to inflict upon the protesting ministers, merely for adherence to their profession, and taking measures to support it, after it was relinquished by the Synod; against which censures they had previously protested, and continue to protest, as null and void, and such as, with respect to grounds, manner, and some circumstances accompanying them, will be found unequalled in the presbyterian church, as a detail of facts (were it proper here to give it), would, they doubt not, make it evident to the impartial world. By their conduct in this matter, the guilt of the judicatories has been highly aggravated; they have crowned their defection by persecuting those who opposed it, and have aimed a deadly stroke not only against the character and usefulness of a few ministers, but against the public cause for which they were contending." \*

By giving a faithful narrative of the proceedings which led to the separation of these brethren, I have furnished my readers with the means of judging how far such language as that now quoted, was warranted by any part of the procedure

\* Declaration appended to Mr M'Crie's Statement of Difference, &c. P. 216.

of the General Associate Synod. The conduct of the Synod toward those brethren who did not go along with them in the remodelling of the Testimony, and in the various steps that were rendered necessary by this measure, was in the highest degree forbearing. They granted them all facilities for *exoneration* (according to the technical language of the day), by permitting them to dissent, protest, or remonstrate as oft as they pleased. They expressed their readiness to hold communion with them, notwithstanding any diversity of sentiment that might exist between them with regard to the points at issue. They were quite willing, not only that their brethren should hold their own peculiar views on these points, but that they should also be at liberty to receive into their communion persons who might "better understand or approve of the former statement of their principles." The only prohibition which they laid upon them was, that they should not impugn or oppose, either from the pulpit or the press, the received principles of the Synod. This prohibition was reasonable in itself, and was necessary for maintaining the peace and unity of the church. But none of these things would satisfy the remonstrants. They withdrew from the meetings of presbytery ; they refused to hold communion with their brethren on sacramental occasions. By the circulation of papers, and by addresses from the pulpit, they endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the people against the Synod ; and they disregarded the summons of those ecclesiastical judicatories, to which they had promised subjection in the Lord. At length they gave in a paper, virtually declining the authority of the supreme court ; and a short while after, they constituted themselves into a separate presbytery, in opposition to the Synod.

Such being the state of matters between the General Associate Synod and the remonstrating brethren, there were only two courses which the Synod could pursue. The one was, to permit these brethren to act in whatever way they pleased, without taking any notice of their conduct ; the other was, to call them to an account for their conduct, and

to inflict on them such discipline as the circumstances of the case might require. To have adopted the first of these, would scarcely have been compatible with the maintenance of their authority as an ecclesiastical court, and would moreover have been inconsistent with that fidelity which it behoved them to exercise toward all their members. That the Synod were under the necessity of taking judicial notice of the conduct of these ministers who had set themselves up in opposition to their authority, is what few will be inclined to deny. Forbearance, in all societies, must have its limits; and it was certainly not to be expected that forbearance could continue to be exercised toward these persons, after that the Synod received information of their having formed themselves into a separate ecclesiastical court. That the sentence of deposition, however, ought to have been inflicted on them, I am not inclined to admit. All that appears to have been necessary, was to suspend them from the exercise of their ministry, in connexion with the Synod, until that they should make due acknowledgment for the part which they had acted. In the case of Mr M'Crie, also, I admit that the sentence was too hastily pronounced. Whether he chose to avail himself of it or not, an opportunity ought at least to have been given of making such explanation or vindication of his conduct, as might appear to himself proper. A summons had indeed been given him by the presbytery, to appear before the Synod, and he refused to obey it; but he had a right to expect that the Synod, before pronouncing upon him the sentence of deposition, should have summoned him before them, to answer for that part of his conduct, on account of which such sentence was chiefly pronounced.

With regard to the other ministers, they had no reason to complain of any injustice done to them in this respect. Mr Aitken's case, which was distinct from the rest, was delayed from one meeting to another, and he was formally summoned to attend, but he chose to disobey. Messrs Bruce and Hog were equally disobedient; for both of them were summoned, by authority of Synod, to appear before their re-



spective presbyteries, and answer to certain specified charges ; but none of them appeared in obedience to the summons, and they could not, therefore, have any fair ground of complaint, should sentence be pronounced against them in their absence. Mr Hog's presbytery was lenient to him. The presbytery, of which Mr Bruce was a member, acted in strict conformity with the directions given them by the supreme court.

It is a question which will present itself to the minds of many,—What had the General Associate Synod done, that these few ministers, whose names have been so often mentioned, should consider it an imperative duty to renounce their communion, and form themselves into a separate religious society ? Had the Synod become less sound in the faith ? Had they become less faithful in their exhibition of the pure doctrines of the gospel ? Had they become more relaxed in their discipline ? Had they shown any inclination to tolerate either heresy or immorality amongst their members ? No such charge was ever preferred against them. What, then, were they guilty of, that there should be so many dissents, and protests, and remonstrances presented against their proceedings, and at last a complete separation made from their communion ?

So far as I have been able to glean from the writings of the separating brethren, the following were the chief grounds of complaint preferred by them against the Synod :—

*First*, In remodelling their Testimony, the Synod did not take “the original Secession Testimony,” but the Scriptures, for their guide ; and they did not designate it by the old title of “Act, Declaration, and Testimony, for the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline, and Government of the Church of Scotland,” &c. ; but they simply styled it, “Narrative and Testimony agreed upon and enacted by the General Associate Synod.” It was hence inferred, that the new Testimony must be different from the old, and this was made the ground of a charge against the Synod. “The Testimony itself,” says Mr M'Crie in his Statement,\* “or, as it is otherwise de-

nominated, 'the Testimony properly so called,' is evidently very different from the original Secession Testimony. The last mentioned, we have seen, was formally and specifically a testimony for the religious profession of the reformed Church of Scotland, or for the true religion, as attained by, and fixed in, that church. The new Testimony is drawn up upon the principle, that the church's testimony ought to be taken immediately from the Scriptures, without a reference to the attainments of former times,—an opinion repeatedly pleaded for by its compilers, and evidently acted upon in the present instance. Accordingly, the doctrines asserted in it are asserted simply as agreeable, and the doctrines condemned as contrary, to the word of God, without viewing them in their reference to the Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards, and even without mentioning any of these, except perhaps, in an incidental way, in an instance or two. Besides, it contains doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the confession or terms of communion of this or any other presbyterian church. In all these respects, it is different from the original Testimony of Seceders, and cannot be looked upon as a testimony for the doctrine, &c. of the Church of Scotland, in any other sense than as it may contain materially the same truths, in most instances, with our Confession and Catechisms; which is true as to the confessions or declared principles of different religious bodies, and even of those of independent persuasions."

This is certainly a singular charge to bring against a protestant church court, that it should act upon the principle of taking its testimony "immediately from the Scriptures, without a reference to the attainments of former times;" and that it should assert, or condemn, doctrines "simply as agreeable or contrary to the word of God, without viewing them in their reference to the Confession of Faith, and other subordinate standards." The General Associate Synod were accused of acting upon this principle; and most men will consider that they were entitled to praise, rather than blame,

for such christian conduct. They honestly avowed the principle upon which they acted, when they declared, "The foundation upon which we rest the whole of our ecclesiastical constitution, is the testimony of God in his word. That main pillar of the Reformation, 'That the Bible contains the whole religion of protestants,' we adopt for our fundamental principle, and build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." "We call no man nor church, Master. One is our Master, even Christ, and his word our only unerring rule. 'To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'"<sup>\*</sup> Though the charge were true, that the Testimony "contains doctrines that are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith, and which were never received into the confession or terms of communion of this or any other presbyterian church," no candid person will say that this could form a just ground of complaint against the Synod. For the question is not, whether these doctrines "are contradictory to those of the Confession of Faith," but, "Are they contradictory to the word of God?" There was certainly nothing morally wrong in the General Associate Synod altering any part of their Testimony, for the purpose of making it express views which they considered to be more in accordance with Scripture, than those maintained by the compilers of former presbyterian confessions.

*Secondly,* The Synod gave a decided expression of their opinion with regard to the unlawfulness of the connexion between church and state. They declared, that "christian magistrates have no power to give laws to the church; to appoint her office-bearers, or dictate to them in the discharge of their office; to prescribe a confession of faith, or form of worship, to the church, or their subjects in general; authoritatively to call meetings of church judicatories, in ordinary cases, or to direct or control them in their judicial procedure: In matters purely religious, civil rulers have no right to

<sup>\*</sup> Testimony. P. 9.



judge for any but themselves.” They testified “against all such conjunction of church and state, as subjects the state to the church in civil matters, or the church to the state in those that are religious.”\* The avowal of these and similar sentiments, formed another ground of complaint against the Synod, on the part of the separating brethren. The following extract from the “Statement” already referred to,† will show in what respects the views which they held on this point differed from those of the Synod.

After affirming “that Christ is the sole Head of the church, that he has an exclusive right to appoint all her laws and ordinances of worship and service, that all administrations in his house are to be performed in his name and by his authority, and that his servants, in the proper line of their office, do not act by the authority of, or by delegation from, any earthly prince or legislature, so as to receive and execute their mandates, or be responsible to them in their ministrations,” the writer, speaking in his own name, and in the name of his brethren, says :—“But, in full consistency with these principles, they think they can maintain, that civil authority may be lawfully and beneficially employed in the advancement of religion and the kingdom of Christ. The care of religion, in the general view of it (in which respect the consideration of it is previous to that of the form which it assumes in consequence of supernatural revelation, and the erection of a church state), belongs to the magistrate’s office ; and it is his duty to watch over its external interests, and to exert himself, in his station, to preserve upon the minds of his subjects an impression of its obligations and sanctions, and to suppress irreligion, impiety, profanity, and blasphemy. It is also the duty of civil rulers, and must be their interest, to exert themselves to introduce the gospel into their dominions, when it may be but partially enjoyed ; and, by salutary laws and encouragements, to provide them with the means of instruction, and a settled dispensation of

\* Testimony. Pp. 195, 198.

† M’Crie’s Statement of the Difference, &c. Pp. 79, 80.

ordinances, especially in poor and desolate, or in ignorant and irreligious, parts of the country ; all which they may do without propagating christianity by the sword, or forcing a profession of religion on their subjects by penal laws. When religion has become corrupt, after it has been received and established in a nation, and has degenerated into a system of falsehood, superstition, idolatry, and tyranny, carried on by churchmen, aided by the civil powers ; and where various abuses of this kind are interwoven with the civil constitution and administration, an eminent exercise of civil authority is requisite for the reformation of these ; not by the abolition of all laws respecting religion, as a matter which civil government has no concern with, and by leaving every thing to individual exertion, or voluntary associations, which would only breed anarchy and endless disorder ; but by magistrates taking an active part in prosecuting a public reformation, removing external hindrances, correcting published and established abuses, allowing, and in some cases calling together and supporting, ecclesiastical assemblies for settling the internal affairs of the church and of religion, ‘ that unity and peace may be preserved,’ &c. ; as was done by the rulers of different countries at the period of the reformation from popery, and in Britain at the time of the Westminster Assembly. In an ordinary state of matters, they also judge that it is the duty of civil rulers to maintain and support the interests of religion, and the kingdom of Christ, by publicly recognising and countenancing its institutions, giving the legal sanction to a public profession or confession of its faith, a particular form of worship and ecclesiastical discipline, which are ratified as national ; and by making public and permanent provision for the religious instruction of their subjects, and the maintenance of divine ordinances among them.”

Though these views differed materially from those which the Synod expressed, in reference to the magistrate’s power in matters of religion, yet the Synod declared their willingness to exercise forbearance with their brethren on this point.

They did not prohibit them from receiving into their communion persons who might "better understand or approve of the former statement of their principles:" And certainly it was not imposing on them any thing unreasonable or oppressive, when they were required to exercise forbearance on their part. This forbearance they would not exercise. They preferred forming themselves into a separate society; and it may safely be left to an impartial posterity to judge between them and the Synod in this matter.

*Thirdly*, The Synod refused to blend things civil and sacred in their public religious covenanting; and this formed another ground of complaint against them. That my readers may judge of the difference between the Synod and their brethren, on this point, I shall quote the language of both parties. The Synod declared, "That public religious covenanting is the deed of a number of church members, in which they jointly and publicly profess, to renounce all hope of life from the covenant of works; to take hold of the covenant of grace, and to devote themselves to the Lord, and in the strength of promised grace, engage faithfully to cleave to him, to hold fast his truth, to perform the various duties which they owe to God and man, in their respective stations and relations, and to strengthen one another's hands in the work of the Lord." They declared further, "That there is a great difference between civil and religious covenants. In the former, an appeal is made to God, as the Moral Governor and Judge of the world. In the latter, we come under engagements to him, as our God, and the God of his church. In a civil covenant, we, in a civil character, enter into or seal an obligation with respect to things merely temporal. In a religious covenant, we, as spiritual priests, 'present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God.' Although, in New Testament times, a whole nation should join in this duty, it could be viewed in no other light than that of an extensive church, including all the individuals who constitute the nation, as, in their spiritual character, devoting themselves and their seed to the Lord." "In using such



expressions as these, *Church* and *Church-members*, the Synod does not mean that persons cannot, in any case, warrantably enter into religious covenants, except under the direction of ecclesiastical courts, or as formally met as a worshipping assembly; but that it is incumbent on men in their character as members of the Church of Christ, and not in their civil character, as members of the state.” \*

According to these views of the Synod, covenanting was regarded by them as a religious ordinance, to be performed by the church, and having respect solely to matters of a religious nature. The separating brethren, on the other hand, considered it “as a kind of civil or political transaction, or at least as a politico-ecclesiastical one, to be performed by men in a civil character, and in which they are to make matters of a civil nature, the matter of their covenant engagements.” In the remonstrances which they presented to the Synod, they referred to the Synod’s account of covenanting, in the following terms:—“A very different account should have been given of it. It (covenanting) is not incumbent on men properly, either in their ecclesiastical character, or in their civil character, but as men and as subjects of the moral law, and that law extends to them in every character they sustain. Accordingly, some of the duties engaged to, may be immediately connected with their ecclesiastical character, and others peculiar to their civil character. What, then, can be the reason of all this zeal to set the one character against the other? Is it to show the mistake of blending civil and religious things in the Solemn League, or to expose the absurdity of the covenanters describing themselves by names and titles belonging to their civil character? Certainly, if no other account was to be made of them than as they sustained the character of church members, these titles and designations were highly improper.” Again, “The doctrine of this new Testimony, on the subject of public vows and covenants, and the application of it to the covenants of our ancestors, afford another important

\* Testimony, pp. 151, 154.

and complicated cause of remonstrance. Covenanting, in the general, is improperly described, and limited to one species of it, to the exclusion of other modes of it equally warrantable; and explicit, formal, occasional, and extraordinary covenants and vows are not properly distinguished from engagements or implicit covenanting, belonging to all christian churches, or the religious exercises generally performed in them. In the latter sense, which is that of the definition, there is no propriety of charging other parties in the land, as is done in the Narrative, with denying or totally neglecting this duty. These duties are not founded on the broad basis of the moral law, as applicable to mankind in all their various stations and relations, but are confined to men as under the evangelical covenant, whose obligation arises from revelation. National compacts, and oaths between kings and subjects, relating to religion, promissory oaths concerning the faithful administration of offices and duties, treaties and leagues between cities, princes, and kingdoms, in which religious interests may be partly the subject, and in which men act in another character than that which is merely ecclesiastical, are upon the matters exploded. The most noted leagues and associations, in which religion and reformation have been deeply interested, in other lands, and in Britain, must be accounted unlawful, and not obligatory. The attempt to settle the extent and permanency of the obligation of the National and Solemn League on posterity, merely upon the morality of the duties, or the permanency of a church state, is altogether inadequate. The common and very conclusive argument for the national and perpetual obligation of them, taken from the public capacity in which they were sworn, and repeatedly ratified, and the permanency of the national and political state of the three kingdoms, is hereby lost and intentionally given up.” \*

Such were the different views entertained by the Synod,

\* The above quotations are given, as extracted from the first and second remonstrances, by the Rev. Alexander Allan (of Cupar-Angus), in his book on the “ Power of the civil magistrate,” &c. pp. 106, 107.

and by those who separated from them, on the subject of public covenanting. Though the difference of opinion on this point had been much greater than it really was, it certainly did not form a valid ground for the latter withdrawing from the communion of the former. The latter, indeed, affirmed that this was not a speculative question, but “a practical point of deep and serious consideration.”\* I can find no evidence that those who held this “practical point of deep and serious consideration,” acted, either as christians or men, in any respect different from their brethren who did not hold it; and it is difficult to conceive in what sense that can be called a “practical point,” which has no apparent influence upon the practice of those who maintain it. The one class were as faithful and diligent in preaching the gospel, in opposing error, in suppressing vice, and in promoting the interests of godliness, as the other; and to withdraw from the communion of good men, because they did not approve of blending things civil and sacred in religious covenanting, and because they did not approve of the conduct of their sires in doing so, was making a division in the church on grounds which those who calmly and impartially consider the matter, will pronounce to be insufficient.

On a review of the whole proceedings which have been narrated in this chapter, it will be found that the General Associate Synod acted with great caution and deliberation in revising their Testimony, and other official documents; that they treated the remonstrating brethren with much indulgence, showing no disposition to exercise discipline, until that these brethren manifested a spirit of insubordination, and had actually commenced pursuing a divisive course; and, finally, that the sentiments which they expressed on the subject of the magistrate’s power, in matters of religion, and also on the subject of covenanting, were not new in the Secession Church. Among the persons who may peruse this narrative, a diversity of opinion will of course exist, as to whether the sentiments which the Synod expressed on these

\* M’Crie’s Statement, p. 197.



subjects were right or wrong. Many there are who will vindicate these sentiments with all their heart; others will reject them with a pious abhorrence. Each individual has an equal right to hold, and to express his sentiments on these controverted points; and I shall not quarrel with any one who may choose to affirm (in opposition to my own opinion), that the views of the Synod, on these points, were erroneous. But whether erroneous or not, the Synod, in giving utterance to them, were doing nothing more than embodying sentiments which had long prevailed in the Secession Church, and which had already found a place in her official papers. Though the Synod, on this occasion, gave a more full, clear, and explicit declaration of them, than had previously been given, yet the avowal of them, formerly made, had been sufficiently distinct, so as to render utterly groundless the charge which has been ignorantly preferred against the Secession, of having made a change of principle in this respect.

The language of the Associate Presbytery, in their Answers to Mr Nairn, has been quoted in a former part of this work;\* but it is necessary here again to advert to it; for it bears most decidedly upon the point at present under consideration: it furnishes a convincing proof that the ministers of the Secession were equally opposed to the interference of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, in 1743, when the Answers to Mr Nairn were prepared, as they were in 1804, when the new Testimony was enacted. The Presbytery declared, " True religion is not only the church's blessing, but her very substance; so that true religion and a true church, cannot be divided. Now, if true religion became a part of the civil constitution, it inevitably follows that the church became a part of the state; which doctrine, as it is absurd in itself, so it lays a plain foundation for erastianism, overturning the distinction betwixt the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the kingdoms of this world. Moreover, if the true religion (which is spiritual and supernatural), became a part of the civil constitution, then it could no longer

\* Vol. i. p. 243.

remain a *civil*, but became a *religious*, a spiritual, a supernatural constitution." They further declared, that "the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office. And as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men's good and evil works that they can have any inspection; so it is only over these which they must needs take cognizance of, for the said public good; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far alienarily, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men's consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church." No sophistry nor wrangling can explain away the literal meaning of these declarations; and no ingenuity can extract from them any other doctrine, than that which is decidedly hostile to the alliance between church and state.

But as this application of them was disputed by those brethren who left the Synod, I shall quote the interpretation which was given of them by the person from whose pen the Answers to Nairn proceeded, or at least who took an active part in preparing them: And, when an author tells us what is the meaning of his own language, we are certainly bound to receive his interpretation as the just one. The writer to whom I refer, is the Reverend Adam Gib, who was a member of the Associate Presbytery, during the period of their controversy with Mr Nairn. In 1774, he published his "Display of the Secession Testimony;" and, in a note appended to that work, he makes the following remarks on the above declarations:—"The writer of this account is the only person now remaining in the Associate Synod, who had special occasion to be acquainted with the precise intention upon which the several terms of the above paragraphs (with the other terms of this declaration and defence), were originally laid. He does not mean any other intention than what the words themselves, when properly

weighed, do naturally and necessarily suggest. But as this may not be so readily adverted unto, in a cursory reading of what is purposely concise and comprehensive, he offers the following paraphrase and explanation of it.

“ 1. The great end of magistracy is the *public good* of society ; \* distinguished from all interfering private interests. The public good of *outward order* ; as not versant, like the gospel ministry, about the disorders of men’s hearts ; and the public good of common order in all *reasonable* society, not only in the general society of the nation, or commonwealth, but also in all the particular societies comprehended within the same, civil or religious, so far as these do not strike, according to the principles of right reason, against the peace and welfare of the general society ; that each may enjoy the benefit of the magistrate’s office, for preserving such order as is common to all, according as each partakes of the common nature of society. And this *great* end of the magistrate’s office, is the *only* end that he *can* propose ; that he can equitably and justly propose, in a *sole* respect unto that office, whatever other good ends he may propose to himself, in respect to any other character which he bears. All which public good is ultimately *unto the glory of God*, as the universal Sovereign of the world ; an acknowledgment of whose being and government lies at the root of all confidence and duty in human society ; while this acknowledgment is also made, at least materially, in all that maintenance of good order.

“ 2. These invested with magistracy are to prosecute the above-mentioned end of their office, according to the nature of it, *civilly*, in such ways as agree to the nature of civil society, without subordinating any religious institutions or ordinances to that end. In doing which, it is *only* over men’s good and evil *works* (comprehending works of the tongue as well as hand), that they can have any inspection, without pretending to any control of men’s judgments, hearts, or thoughts ; and this inspection is *only* over these good and evil works of men, which they must needs take cognizance of,

\* The italics that occur in these quotations are Mr Gib’s.



for the *said* public good ; so that they are not to interfere with any of men's works, in which the public good of society is not properly concerned. At the same time, their jurisdiction about men's works, must be in *such* a manner, and proceed *so far only* as is requisite for the said public good, only in a civil manner, as above expressed, and without proceeding so far as to serve the purposes of resentment or private interest, beside or beyond the public good. Thus the magistrate must not assume any lordship immediately over men's *consciences*, in offering to make himself a judge of men's religious principles ; nor must he encroach upon the *special privileges* and *business* of the church, by assuming a cognizance of men's religious conduct or behaviour, farther than the public good of society is concerned, while all other cognizance thereof belongs particularly to the church state.

“ 3. It is to be considered, that the whole institution of the magistrate's office lies in *natural principles*, being no way founded in the revelation of grace, nor at all peculiar to such as enjoy the benefit of that revelation. And, accordingly, the whole end of his office must be understood as *cut out by* the same natural principles ; so that it cannot, in any part or degree, extend beyond the compass thereof. It were, therefore, *absurd* to suppose, that *any exercise* of that office were competent unto, or incumbent upon, the civil magistrate, precisely as such, other than what can be *argued for* and *defended* from *natural principles*, without having recourse to any principles of revealed religion for the rule or measure of his magistratical administration.

“ But all this is obviously meant of what the magistrate owes unto all his subjects in common ; and of how he is to proceed with them, by way of necessary jurisdiction ; that, in all such matters, his procedure is not to be according to the rule or measure of revealed, but of natural, principles ; whereas, in matters which are optional and arbitrary to the supreme magistrate, with respect to his subjects, and what must be confined to some of them, as the employing of persons in public trust under him (which none can claim as

their natural or birth-right, nor can justly complain of an encroachment upon any such right, by their not being so employed) : The christian magistrate ought to determine himself, not merely by natural, but also by revealed or christian principles ; while all the concerns of earthly kingdoms, with all the influence that is competent to every civil station, so far as consistent with the nature thereof, should be subservient to the kingdom of Christ ; and this is the case as to all that countenancing and encouraging of the true friends of the christian state, which he is very eminently and effectually capable of ; with all the discountenancing and discouraging of the enemies of that state, which he is as eminently and effectually capable of, without any encroachment on their natural or birth-right privileges, upon religious accounts.” \*

Such are the sentiments which, according to Mr Gib, were held by the Associate Presbytery, nearly an hundred years ago, on the subject of the magistrate's power. The public good of “ *outward order*,” and of “ *common order*,” “ in all reasonable society,” was declared to be the *sole end* of his office. This end, those invested with the magistracy, are to prosecute *civilly*, “ in such ways as agree to the nature of civil society, *without subordinating any religious institutions or ordinances to that end*.” They are not to assume “ any lordship immediately over men's consciences,” nor offer to make themselves “ judges of men's religious principles,” nor encroach “ upon the special privileges and business of the church.” The *whole institution* of their office “ lies in *natural principles*, being no way founded in the revelation of grace, nor at all peculiar to such as enjoy the benefit of that revelation.” Accordingly, “ the whole end of it must be understood as *cut out* by the same natural principles, so that it cannot, *in any part or degree*, extend beyond the compass thereof.” These were the sentiments of the Associate Presbytery. They are sufficiently plain, and coincide very closely with those that, in later times, have been expressed by writers on the Voluntary Church

\* Gib's Display, vol. i. p. 312, &c.

question. While such sentiments as these are on record, in the official documents of the Secession Church, published soon after the commencement of the Secession, it is not fair to bring the charge of apostacy, perjury, and infidelity against the present race of Seceders, for avowing similar opinions.

When a motion was made by a venerable father of the Associate Synod, in the year 1759, and afterwards repeated in the years 1760 and 1761, that an address be presented to the king, by the Synod, complaining of the religious grievances that prevailed in the land, and calling upon him for a redress of the same, only two individuals (the mover and the seconder), could be found to support the motion;\* and, to show that the motion was rejected on the ground of the prevailing sentiments of the Synod being unfavourable to the interference of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, I quote the following language from a speech which Mr Adam Gib made against the motion, and which he afterwards published at the request of his brethren. One of the arguments brought forward in favour of the motion was, "That the generation have neither will, nor the proper power, to set about public reformation, and that warnings given them are quite neglected and despised by the bulk of these lands;" and that, therefore, application ought to be made directly to the king, and other rulers, for interposing their authority and power. To this argument Mr Gib replied:—

"Such an argument seems to make directly against the motion, unless we should ascribe to the civil magistrate an erastian sort of power, to choose people's religion for them, and impose it upon them, whether they will or not. Besides, in a free country, where only the free religion can thrive, this way of reformation cannot be supposed practicable by the civil magistrate, though it were competent to him. And as our rulers claim no power but what comes from the people, it can never be properly used against the body of the people; however good in itself the end might be for which it were so used. If, then, we would judge what the rulers

\* Vol. i. p. 349.



have a power to do, in public matters, we must judge of it from what the body of the people are justly disposed to have done. And one may look on all the magisterial ways of civil power and authority, as being none of God's ordinances for reclaiming a backsliding generation from a course of prevailing errors and corruptions about the matters of revealed religion."\* In another part of his speech, he adds, "If there could be a time for any such application to civil powers as is now proposed, it would seem to have been in the first period of the gospel; when apostles were employed to fight against the fashionable corruptions of the world, in propagating the christian religion. Men who had an universal commission for that end were privileged with supernatural assistance and infallible conduct in the matter; and who were endued with a power of working miracles, by which their authority could easily be documented to earthly powers, wherever needful. But, in all the course of their ministry, they made no such application to these powers. They never called in the assistance of the secular arm against the prevailing abominations, whatever advantages they had for doing so, from the universality of their commission, and the miraculous powers with which it was accompanied. Our Lord did not see meet to make choice of that *secular way* for promoting the interests of his kingdom. It cannot be said, that we have any more of a providential intercourse with civil powers than the apostles had, or even near so much as some of them. And christian magistrates can have no more need of being dealt with about the true religion, than heathen magistrates had: Nor can ordinary ministers have a further warrant to deal with the one sort, than apostles had to deal with the other."†

Thirty-six years after this speech had been delivered by Mr Gib, the General Associate Synod had become almost thoroughly imbued with the sentiments which the speech contains. A deep and wide spread conviction prevailed, that the power of the civil magistrate ought not to be exercised

\*Display, vol. ii. p. 241.

† Ibid p. 242.

about matters of religion. Students when receiving licence, ministers and elders at their ordination, and the people when joining the church, or receiving baptism for their children, objected to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith on this subject; and refused, on this ground, to give unqualified assent to the doctrines contained in the Confession. It was the extensive prevalence of these scruples, and a desire to remove them, that led the Synod to issue that decided declaration, in 1796, of which mention has been already made.\* By this declaration, they gave full permission to all their members to make exception to every thing in the Confession, which, taken by itself, seemed to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances; and they disavowed all other means of bringing men into the church, or retaining them in it, "than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the word in the first ages of the christian church, persuasion, not force; the power of the gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate."

From the statements made in this and in the preceding pages, it will appear, that the Synod's doctrine in their new Testimony, on the subject of the magistrate's power, was not new in the Secession Church, especially in that branch of it with which they were more immediately connected. Only they made a more full and explicit declaration of their sentiments, on this question, than had previously been done. There was no need, therefore, for so much lamentation being made upon the subject, as if the Synod, in doing what they did, had been guilty of demolishing the whole foundation of the christian church. On the subject of covenanting, the Synod showed themselves a little in advance of the Associate Presbytery. When the Presbytery, in 1743, passed an act for "renewing our covenants," they declared, that "it was not suitable to their present circumstances, to blend civil and ecclesiastic matters in the oath of God;" assigning as a reason for this, that "the cognizance of civil affairs did not

\* See vol. ii. p. 46.

properly belong to them as a church judicatory." Their refusal "to blend civil and ecclesiastic matters in the oath of God" was not founded on the impropriety of the thing itself, but was qualified by their declaration, "that it was not suitable to their *present circumstances*." But the General Associate Synod inserted no such qualifying clause as this. They seemed to think that the blending of things civil and sacred in religious covenanting was unsuitable in *any* circumstances. They regarded covenanting "as a religious ordinance to be performed by the church, and having a respect *solely* to matters of a religious nature." In this respect, the views entertained by the Synod, must be considered as more enlightened than those entertained by the Presbytery.

Thus have I given a particular account of the proceedings in the General Associate Synod, which terminated in the formation of another branch of the Secession. The points of difference between the Synod and those brethren who withdrew from its communion have been fully stated. Subsequent events have given to these points a more than ordinary importance; and this has led me to dwell upon them more largely than I would otherwise have done. A controversy has now been carrying on for several years in this country, involving exactly the same points, as those to which the attention of the reader has been directed in the preceding part of the narrative; and the proceedings detailed in this chapter will show, that, in so far as the Secession Church is concerned, this controversy is not new. The Secession, in contending for the entire emancipation of the church of Christ from the authority of the state, and in pleading for voluntary churches, is merely carrying into effect principles which have been held by it, or at least by one section of it, for a considerable period.

The division occasioned in the General Synod, by the adopting of the new Testimony, was very insignificant. Not more than five ministers (exclusive of Mr Whytock, who died during the progress of the controversy), left the Synod in consequence of it; and, during the



period of forty years which have elapsed since the division took place, this portion of the Secession has made comparatively little progress. Notwithstanding the coalition which it has effected with that portion of the General Associate Synod, that did not join the union so happily accomplished between the two large bodies of the Secession, it has never been able to gain much ground in the country. It is pleasing, however, to add concerning it, that the gospel has been faithfully and ably preached in its pulpits, and that it has ranked amongst the number of its ministers, some who have been distinguished both as scholars and as christians; and who, by their varied labours, have rendered essential service to the cause both of literature and of religion.

## CHAPTER V.

Course of theological study enlarged. Mr George Paxton elected Professor of Divinity. Released from his pastoral charge. Seat of Divinity Hall in Edinburgh. Discussions concerning Regium Donum in Ireland. Decision of the Synod on this subject. Resolution concerning ministers' stipends. Agree to open a correspondence with other evangelical denominations. Committee of correspondence appointed concerning congregations. Process against Mr Imrie of Kinkell. Articles of libel. Findings of Synod. Mr Imrie rebuked and suspended. Mr Imrie's declaration. Sentence of suspension removed. Twenty-one ministers and four elders protest against this decision. Decision reviewed. And reversed. Nine ministers and one elder dissent. New process against Mr Imrie. Several articles of heresy proved. Mr Imrie deposed. Protests, and declines the authority of Synod. Transatlantic missions. Resolutions of the Associate Synod of Philadelphia respecting the holding of slaves. Union of Presbyterians in Nova Scotia. Missions to the Highlands of Scotland. Aid granted to the Irish Evangelical Society.

THE General Associate Synod, at every period of their history, showed a laudable desire to give respectability and efficiency to their ministry, by making such improvements in their course of theological study, as were required by the growing spirit of the times. While they were anxious, on the one hand, to guard their students against the contamination of prevailing errors, they were no less eager, on the other, to afford them every facility that their circumstances would admit of, for making progress in the various departments of literature, as well as in the acquisition of sound theological knowledge. The separation of Mr Bruce from their communion, and his consequent deposition from the office of the ministry, had left their theological chair vacant ;

and they considered this a fit opportunity for reviewing the course of study which had hitherto been pursued by candidates for the sacred office. It has been already stated, that a committee was appointed by them to take this subject into consideration. After receiving the report of the committee, the Synod resolved, that their Professor of Divinity should give such a summary view of the system, as might be accomplished in the course of five years; that he should examine the students particularly on the subject of his lectures; that each session should continue at least ten weeks, and that the Professor should usually deliver five lectures in the week; that the attendance of the students at the Divinity Hall should be five sessions, and that every student should deliver two discourses during each session; that the Professor should make an annual report to the Synod of the number of students enrolled, and his opinion respecting the capacity and progress of each, and the Synod would consider what course ought to be adopted with regard to those that were careless or incapable. They further resolved, that a second Professor should be appointed to take charge of the students of philosophy, so soon as the necessary funds could be procured. An address was prepared and circulated among the congregations, the object of which was to raise, by collections and donations, a sum of money sufficient to create a permanent fund for defraying the necessary expenses connected with the theological institution, and also to give assistance to young men of talents and piety, in the prosecution of their studies. Though a considerable sum of money was collected, yet the fund never increased to such an extent as to enable the Synod to realize all the objects contemplated by it.

On the 30th of April, 1807, Mr George Paxton, minister at Kilmaurs, was appointed Professor of Divinity, and commenced his labours in September following. From the commencement of the Secession, all those individuals who had been appointed to fill, in succession, the theological chair, in addition to their labours as Professor, had also to dis-



charge the varied duties connected with the superintendence of a congregation ; though it was customary for the Synod to afford them a supply of preachers for their pulpit, during the weeks they were engaged in teaching the students. After the appointment of Mr Paxton to the professorship, a new arrangement was made in this respect. It was declared, that the holding of a double charge was inconsistent with the proper discharge of the arduous duties attached, by the new regulations, to the office of Professor. The relation betwixt Mr Paxton and the congregation of Kilmaurs was dissolved, and he was required to take up his residence in Edinburgh, where the seat of the Divinity Hall was fixed. His salary was fixed first at £150, and afterward at £200, per annum. Being thus released from the harassing toils connected with the oversight of a congregation, and having sufficient leisure to prosecute his biblical and theological researches, he was enabled to give to the students under his charge a much more extended and improved course of prelections, than he could otherwise have done. In addition to his labours, in conducting the business of the theological seminary, during the appointed weeks of each session, he agreed to take the oversight of those young men, connected with the Synod, who might be prosecuting their studies at the College of Edinburgh, during the winter months. By holding frequent meetings with them for religious purposes, and by giving them direction and instruction in those branches of literature, which they were engaged in studying at the University, he both facilitated their progress in learning, and guarded them, at the same time, against adopting those fashionable and pernicious errors, with which young minds are too apt to be fascinated, while attending such public seminaries. The Synod enjoined all the students in their connexion, who were attending the College of Edinburgh, to wait upon the Professor for these purposes, as often as he should find it convenient to meet with them.

A considerable degree of excitement prevailed in many of the Secession congregations in Ireland, about this period, in

consequence of alterations made in the mode of distributing the Regium Donum, or Royal Bounty. At an early period, grants of money had been given from the exchequer for the support of the presbyterian ministers in the north of Ireland. The sum originally given was small, but it gradually increased, until it attained the amount of many thousands annually. \* Soon after the commencement of the present century, a new method of distributing it was adopted by the government. Instead of a sum total being given to each section of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, to be divided according to the pleasure of the synods, amongst the ministers of their own connexion, it was determined that the bounty should be given to each minister, according to a certain scale. The congregations were arranged into three classes, according to the number of families and stipend of each; and the annual allowance granted by government to each minister, was fixed according to this classification. A higher rate was granted to the ministers belonging to the Synod of Ulster, the Remonstrant Synod, the Presbytery of Antrim, and the Southern Association, than to those connected with the Secession. The rate fixed for the former was £50 per annum to the first class, £75 to the second class, and £100 to the third or highest class; while the ministers of the Secession, who were looked upon as of a lower grade, had allocated to them, according to their class, the sums respectively of £40, £50, and £70 per annum. Before any minister could receive the bounty, he was required to take the oath of allegiance, and an attestation to this effect, subscribed by two magistrates, must be transmitted to the proper quarter. If a minister was deposed, or deceased, the Regium Donum still continued to be drawn, in name of the congregation, but the benefit of it was appropriated to a widows' fund. †

This change in the mode of distributing the Royal Bounty,

\* The sum voted by Parliament to the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, for the present year (1838), amounts to £32,000.

† Political Christianity. P. 65.

was obviously designed to give the government a check upon the conduct of those who received it. Should any minister be accused or suspected of disloyalty to the reigning powers, it was easy for those who kept the strings of the government purse, to effect his removal, by merely withholding his annual allowance, seeing that, in many of the congregations, this allowance was almost all that the ministers had to depend upon for the support of themselves and families.\*

When the Synod—belonging to the Anti-burgher portion of the Secession in Ireland—met at Belfast on the 4th of July, 1809, intimation was given them concerning the above mentioned change in the mode of distributing the Regium Donum; and the question, Whether the bounty could be accepted on the terms proposed? became the subject of discussion. It was the unanimous opinion of those who spoke, that it could not be accepted on such terms.† The motives which influenced the Synod, in coming to this decision, were wholly of a religious nature, and respected their spiritual independence as a church of Christ. It is proper, however, to remark, that the Irish Synod did not object to receive the bounty, on the ground of its being paid out of the public treasury. When it was paid to the Synod in one sum, and equally distributed among the ministers, they had thankfully received it, regarding it as a free gift, and as a proof of the fostering care of government.‡ But they now objected to it, on the ground of the obnoxious conditions with which it was clogged. That no minister should be entitled to receive the bounty, unless he should previously qualify himself for it, by taking the oath of allegiance at his ordination,

\* Since the above was written, I have noticed a paragraph quoted from the *Dublin Evening Post*, in which it is stated, that government have published some new regulations respecting the distribution of the parliamentary grant to the Irish presbyterian clergy. The classification above mentioned is now abolished. Every presbyterian clergyman is to receive £75 a-year; but no endowment will in future be granted or continued without the punctual payment of the congregational stipend.

† Letter in the *Christian Magazine* for 1809. P. 447.

‡ Ibid. P. 448.



they considered as a purchasing of their loyalty; and the classification system was regarded with a suspicious eye, as tending to introduce a distinction amongst the ministers, inconsistent with presbyterian parity, besides being unjust in itself, as, according to this system, the smallest sums were given to the poorest class, and the largest sums to the wealthiest.

A petition from the presbytery of Belfast was presented to the General Associate Synod in Scotland, at their meeting in April, 1810, requesting them to give their opinion and advice on this subject. This petition was brought up in consequence of certain proceedings which had taken place in the case of Mr Carmichael, minister at Ahoghill. His stipend amounted to about £40 a-year. His family were in a state of great destitution. He was required by his congregation to decline the Regium Donum. He expressed his willingness to do so, if his congregation would add to his stipend only half the amount of the bounty. With this request they refused to comply; and because, in these circumstances, he accepted of the Royal Gift, their indignation was excited against him. It was in connexion with such a representation as this, that the Synod were called upon to give their opinion and advice. Their opinion was in favour of the Regium Donum being accepted in such circumstances; and this opinion was officially communicated to the synod in Ireland. The advice was unfavourably received by several of the congregations on the Irish side of the channel, and the agitation of the question produced a considerable ferment among the people.

At the next meeting of the General Synod, in April, 1811, this subject again came under their review. Mr Bryce, one of the ministers connected with the Synod in Ireland, had protested against a decision of that Synod, agreeing to act upon the advice given by the General Synod, in the preceding year; and he now brought his protest and appeal before the supreme court. Memorials and representations, stating objections against the Secession ministers in

Ireland accepting of the Regium Donum, were presented from the congregations of Belfast, Ahoghill, Lylehill, Kiliag, and Knocklochrin. In the case of the Belfast congregation, the people appeared to be very equally divided in their sentiments on this question ; for while the memorial against the Regium Donum was subscribed by eighty-eight persons, a protest against the transmitting of this memorial to the Synod, was subscribed by eighty-six. The representation from the congregation of Ahoghill was subscribed by six elders and sixty-seven members ; and the one from the congregation of Lylehill was subscribed by three elders and fifty members. But from both of these congregations counter memorials were presented, accusing the majority of making unreasonable demands upon their ministers. In a paper, subscribed by six elders and seven members of the committee of the congregation of Ahoghill, it was stated, that a proposal had been made to their minister to relinquish the Regium Donum, and that he had expressed his willingness to do so, on condition that the congregation would augment his stipend from £40 to £60 ; but that the congregation refused to make this augmentation. A paper, subscribed by three elders and six members of the committee of the congregation of Lylehill, made a similar statement respecting their minister. Though he had not received more than £36 or £37 annually, upon an average, from his congregation, yet he was willing, for the sake of peace, to renounce all claim to the Regium Donum, if a small increase were made to his stipend, so as to allow him a moderate competency ; but this reasonable proposal the majority had thought fit to reject.

Complaints were, at the same time, presented against Mr Bryce, for exciting animosities in the congregations, on the subject of the Regium Donum, and for being guilty of conduct subversive of the discipline of the presbyterian church, by going into the bounds of the neighbouring congregations, assembling the people, preaching to them, baptizing their children, and bestowing upon his brethren the most oppro-

brious titles, such as “hirelings,” “pensioners,” “wolves in sheep’s clothing,” &c. ; making use of the divine prophecies to warrant him in these abusive representations, and pursuing this unbrotherly course of conduct in defiance of the authority of the synod of Ireland, who had warned him, that, if he persisted in these disorderly practices, they would inflict censure upon him in due form.

A petition was also presented from a number of persons, who had been connected with the Burgher congregation of Colerain and Randlestown, stating that they had withdrawn from their former connexion, in consequence of their ministers accepting of the *Regium Donum*, on the terms proposed by government ; and they wished a supply of sermon to be sent to them by the General Synod. All these memorials and petitions were referred by the Synod to a committee, who were appointed to take the whole subject into consideration, and to report at a subsequent sederunt.

The following report was presented by the committee, and, after undergoing revision, was unanimously adopted by the Synod :—“ That though the Synod do not consider the acceptance of the *Regium Donum*, in all circumstances, as unlawful, yet they cannot approve of receiving it on the terms specified in the late grant. But as every thing which may be objectionable ought not forthwith to be made a term of communion ; so the Synod judge that, in present circumstances, the acceptance or non-acceptance of the *Donum* ought not to be viewed in this light ; and they cannot help expressing their disapprobation of the conduct of those who have on this account withdrawn from the dispensation of divine ordinances in their respective congregations, and enjoin such persons to return to their duty, and exercise forbearance with their ministers and brethren in this matter ; and in doing so, no session shall exclude them from church privileges for past irregularities in this affair. As, however, the acceptance of the *Donum* has proved a stumbling-block to many church members, the Synod judge, in order to remove it, that no presbytery in Ireland ought in future to



grant a moderation, without being satisfied that the sum offered by the congregation is adequate to the support of a gospel ministry, according to their respective situations, independent of any such aid : And they recommend it to the several congregations already settled, to take immediate steps for the purpose of increasing the stipends of their ministers, that they may, as soon as possible, have no farther occasion for the assistance of government ; and, when the respective presbyteries shall be satisfied with the support given, that they shall be bound to relinquish all interest in the Regium Donum."

In reference to Mr Bryce, against whom the above mentioned complaints were preferred, the Synod required of him an acknowledgment of the irregularity of his conduct, and an expression of sorrow for it ; they required of him, further, that he should refrain from all such practices for the future, and acquiesce in the decision now given respecting the Regium Donum. But he refused either to make the acknowledgment, or to promise the subjection, that was required ; and the Synod, on account of his obstinacy, suspended him from the exercise of the ministerial office till their next meeting.

If the support given by the congregations in Ireland to their ministers was scanty, the stipends given by the majority of congregations in Scotland were found also to be very inadequate. Some ministers had found it necessary to resign their charges on this account, and others continued to labour under distressing anxieties and privations. The discussions which had taken place concerning the Irish Regium Donum, had drawn the attention of the Synod to this subject ; and, at their meeting in August, 1811, they renewed an injunction formerly given to presbyteries, to report annually to the Synod the manner in which congregations performed this necessary duty of giving adequate support to their ministers. The insufficiency of pecuniary exertion, on the part of the people, was attributed by the Synod to inconsideration, rather than to unwillingness or inability ; and ministers were

required to remind them, prudently but honestly, of the obligations under which they lay, from Scripture, equity, and voluntary engagement, to exert themselves for the due maintenance of gospel ordinances. It was further agreed, that a committee of Synod should be annually appointed to attend to this business. Vacant congregations, also, were required to make a small addition to the allowance usually given to preachers. The sum appointed to be given, each Sabbath, by the poorer congregations, was sixteen shillings; and those congregations that were in ordinary circumstances, were enjoined to give not less than a guinea. It will not be affirmed, that either of these sums was too large to defray the travelling expenses, and other contingencies, of such a useful class of individuals as the Secession preachers.

At this meeting, the Synod approved of a proposal that was submitted to them, to open a correspondence with other religious denominations, holding evangelical sentiments in Scotland, England, and Ireland. A committee was appointed to prepare a circular letter for this purpose. At a subsequent meeting, the Rev Alexander Allan read the draught of an overture, which he had prepared on this subject. But the Synod delayed the consideration of it; and it does not appear that any farther steps were taken in this matter, until the union betwixt the two large bodies of the Secession was accomplished.

In the following year (May 1812), another important measure was adopted, having for its object the obtaining of correct information concerning the state of religion in the congregations connected with their association in Ireland and America. A committee of correspondence was appointed to obtain the necessary information. A similar measure was adopted in reference to the congregations in this country. The clerks of presbyteries were required to send up to the convener of the committee, now appointed, an account of the state of religion in the congregations of their respective districts. In this account they were required to state, amongst other things, the number of communicants connected with

each congregation, the average attendance on public worship during the Sabbath, and also the number and state of praying societies in the several congregations.

Such measures as these were calculated to have a happy effect in uniting the different parts of the association more closely together, in stimulating the slothful, in encouraging the weak, and in promoting the interests of religion throughout the whole. It is to be regretted that churches professing the same faith, have not taken a deeper interest in one another's temporal and spiritual prosperity; that they have acted more upon the selfish than upon the social principle; that, instead of regarding themselves as parts of the same whole, they have looked upon themselves rather as isolated societies, and have in consequence, been too often unmindful of the excellent apostolical precept, which enjoins every man to look "not on his own things, but also on the things of others." Every measure which has a tendency to destroy this selfish principle, to foster a spirit of brotherly kindness, and to bring the different parts of the body of Christ more closely into connexion with one another, is deserving of commendation; and, when such attempts are made, those who have at heart the peace and prosperity of Zion, instead of frowning upon them, ought to give them their cordial support.

A long course of ecclesiastical proceedings, which had been carried on against Mr Robert Imrie, minister at Kinkell, for heresy, was brought to a close at this period. These proceedings, it is possible, may be regarded by some as unimportant in themselves, but as they excited a good deal of attention at the time, in that portion of the Secession Church whose history I am now recording, and as they tend to illustrate the extreme sensitiveness with which the Secession judicatories have ever regarded the slightest approach to error, on the part of any of their ministers, I have deemed it proper to give an outline of them in this record.

So far back as 1801, a member of Mr Imrie's congregation preferred a variety of charges against him, before the



presbytery of Perth, relating partly to the style of his preaching, and partly to the doctrines which he taught. The investigation of these charges showed that Mr Imrie was accustomed, in his public ministrations, to employ modes of expression that were novel and unguarded, and calculated to unsettle the minds of his hearers with regard to some of the fundamental articles of the christian faith. Though he was censured for making use of such expressions, yet the explanations which he gave of his views, in reference to the articles charged against him, were regarded as so far satisfactory, that he was permitted to continue in the exercise of his ministry.

In 1806, fresh charges were preferred against him; and the presbytery of Perth having proceeded to examine witnesses on oath, in reference to these charges, without having previously furnished Mr Imrie with a libel, he appealed to the General Synod against the irregularity of this procedure. Though his protest and appeal were dismissed, as not having been taken at the proper stage of the business, yet the presbytery were enjoined to take a precognition of witnesses, in order to ascertain if there were sufficient grounds for a libel; and should they find that this was the case, they were to put a libel into Mr Imrie's hand, and proceed according to the rules of the church. A precognition of witnesses being taken, it was found that there were sufficient grounds for a libel, and one was accordingly put into his hand. In this libel Mr Imrie was charged with having publicly taught the following doctrines:—1. That there was no proper condition in the covenant of works; and that Adam would have fulfilled no condition though he had stood. 2. That there was no proper covenant between the Father and the Son from eternity about man's salvation; for how could God make a bargain with himself; and the Scriptures nowhere make mention of a proper covenant between these divine persons. (He would defy any one to find the word *covenant* used in Scripture, except where it refers to something else). 3. That there was no proper condition in that cove-

nant to be performed by Christ, as the surety of the elect ; that it had been better for the church if the term condition had never been heard of ; that the righteousness of Christ is not the condition of the covenant (that the righteousness of Christ and faith are equally not the condition of the covenant of grace), and that if there was any condition at all, it was the promises. 4. That Christ merited nothing for his people, by his obedience and death ; that, as Mediator, he had nothing to give to God, as an equivalent for the blessings conferred on his people, except what he had received from God ; and that all the price he gave to God was a right improvement of the qualifications which God gave him. 5. That although Christ was Mediator in the eternal purpose of God, yet he was not actual Mediator until his incarnation in the fulness of time, and he never mediated actually until he assumed a human nature : that Christ, as Mediator, has no grace to give to the church, he is only a servant, and what has a servant to give, but what he receives from his master. 6. That the promises of God received by faith, and not the work of Christ, is the ground of the sinner's justification ; that Christ's righteousness is not imputed to believers, except in its fruits and effects ; that it was not Christ's work, in coming into the world, to save sinners, but to do the will of God, and let God see to the salvation of sinners : (That some make a distinction concerning Christ's sufferings, as partly satisfactory and partly exemplary ; but he affirmed that none of them were satisfactory, only the exercise of Christ's mind under them was satisfactory ; and that the satisfaction of Christ was a human satisfaction). 7. That Christ was not the only Redeemer of God's elect, but God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 8. That the Spirit dwells not in believers, but works on the mind by the Word as a mean ; that he only dwells in them by his gifts and graces through the influence of the Word : that in his first dealings with sinners, they are active in the use of means ; and that persons in an adult state must always be first in the use of means, or else they cannot be saved. 9. That the sins of believers expose

them to divine wrath. 10. That the possession by devils, so often narrated in the gospels, is not to be viewed as a real and proper possession, but merely as figurative of certain diseases with which these persons were afflicted : that though the devil might act upon such persons in the way of suggestion, through the medium of external means, yet he can never be said to enter into men, so as to possess their bodies and speak out of them.

Such were the charges of heresy advanced against Mr Imrie ; and the presbytery, after examining a variety of witnesses in support of them, referred the determination of the whole matter to the supreme court, which met at Edinburgh on the 28th of April, 1807. The Synod, after having read, *seriatim*, the depositions of the witnesses, and hearing Mr Imrie's explanations, gave judgment on each of these articles in detail. With regard to the first article contained in the libel, the synod found that Mr Imrie had taught, that there was no proper condition in the covenant of works. On the second article, it was found, that the general enunciation contained in it was not proved ; but it was proved, that he had said, How could God make a bargain with himself ; also, that the Scriptures no where make mention of a proper covenant between these divine persons, as the term covenant is commonly understood amongst men ; and they no where make mention of a proper covenant, except when it refers to something else. In reference to the third article, it was proved, that Mr Imrie had taught, that it had been better for the church, if the term condition had never been heard of, at least unless it had been more accurately defined ; also, that if there was any condition, it is the promises. On the fourth article, it was found, that Mr Imrie had taught, that Christ, as Mediator, had nothing to give to God, as an equivalent for the blessings conferred on the church, except what he had received from God ; that all the price which Christ gave to God was a right improvement of the qualifications that God had given him. The statements contained in the fifth article were fully established. The



sixth article was found not fully proved ; but the Synod reserved to themselves the liberty of conversing with Mr Imrie on the subject. The charge contained in the seventh article was proved, viz. that Mr Imrie had taught, that Christ is not the only Redeemer of God's elect. The eighth and ninth articles were found not proved ; but in reference to them, the Synod reserved the same liberty, as with regard to the sixth. On the subject of the tenth article, the Synod found that Mr Imrie had taught error.

After these findings, an opportunity was given to Mr Imrie to explain more fully his views, by questions being proposed to him on each of the points at issue ; and the result of these interrogations was slightly to modify the finding of the Synod on the first article. Being asked, Why he denied that there was a proper condition in the covenant of works ? he answered, Because that the observance of the positive prescription or law, given to Adam, was the ground on which God promised life to him and his prosperity, and not any thing independent of God, in lieu of, or in exchange for, that life. From this answer the Synod found, from the idea which he affixed to the word *proper*, that he did not deny that there was a condition in the covenant of works ; but that he was culpable for introducing into his pulpit discourses abstract distinctions on this subject, which were apt to perplex and unsettle the minds of his hearers. The answers which he gave to the questions, proposed to him on the other points, did not lead to any satisfactory result.

On the ground of what had been proved, in the course of this investigation, one portion of the Synod were for deposing Mr Imrie *instantly* from the office of the holy ministry, and a motion was made to that effect ; another portion were inclined to be more indulgent, and proposed that, in the meantime, he should be rebuked and suspended from the exercise of his ministry, with certification, that if he did not give satisfaction to the Synod at their next meeting, they would then proceed to inflict a higher censure. The vote being stated, " Depose ?" or, " Rebuke and Suspend ?" it

carried by a large majority, that he be rebuked and suspended with certification. Six ministers and one elder craved to have it marked, that they had voted, "Depose." Mr Richard Black entered his protest against certain parts of the findings of the Synod, as being more lenient than the proof warranted.

This business was again resumed by the Synod, at their meeting in April, 1808. Mr Imrie was subjected to the ordeal of another examination. He admitted, in reference to the objectionable points with which he was charged, that he had used language that was improper and calculated to mislead, especially on the subject of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace; and also with regard to the Mediatorial work of Christ. On this last point he substantially retracted the statements, which he had formerly made. He had affirmed that Christ was not actual Mediator till his incarnation in the fulness of time, and that he never mediated actually until he assumed a human nature. Being now asked, If he admitted that Christ really exercised the office of Mediator under the Old Testament in the performance of mediatory acts; he admitted that he did. It was then asked, "Does Mr Imrie admit, that Christ was actually Mediator under the Old Testament?" To which he replied, "That Christ was Mediator actual under the old economy, in performing mediatory acts, so far as competent to him in the divine nature." He then admitted, that he had employed, on this subject, language that was improper and unguarded; and that he had made use of a distinction and refinement that were calculated to perplex and distract the minds of his hearers. On the subject of demoniacal possessions, he admitted that these possessions were real, and that it was highly improper in him to make use of expressions, on this subject, that were fitted to produce a belief of the opposite doctrine.

At the close of his examination by the Synod, he dictated to the clerk the following acknowledgment:—"I am unfeignedly sorry, that by the introduction of certain expres-

sions and distinctions, I have given cause of offence to the church, and I am resolved in the strength of grace to avoid all such in future, and I acquiesce in the judgment of Synod with respect to doctrine on the several articles, as stated in the minutes of Synod." As there existed amongst the members of Synod a considerable diversity of sentiment with regard to Mr Imrie's conduct, it was agreed to delay, till a subsequent meeting, coming to a final decision on this matter.

When the Synod met in April, 1809, Mr Imrie showed a disposition to equivocate ; to explain away some of the explanations which he had formerly given. After a variety of questions had been proposed to him, and answers returned, some of which were not regarded as satisfactory, the following motion was made :—" That the Synod, considering this cause in its extensive character and consequences, and especially considering that the Synod have found Mr Imrie chargeable with error in some instances ; and in other articles, as having used several expressions which have a tendency to mislead gospel hearers, and to undermine some of the most important doctrines of religion ; and the Synod not having received satisfaction for Mr Imrie's offensive conduct, he be presently deposed from the office of the holy ministry."

Another motion was made, " That Mr Imrie be continued under the sentence of suspension till next meeting of Synod ;" and the vote being taken on these two motions, it carried by a majority that Mr Imrie be continued under the sentence of suspension till next meeting. Against this decision Messrs Alexander Pringle, Richard Black, Samuel Gilfillan, Andrew Thomson, and George Paxton, entered their dissent.

At next meeting of Synod (April 1810), this troublesome business again occupied their attention during several sittings. An opportunity was given to Mr Imrie, by means of interrogations proposed, to explain his views on the subject of Christ's mediatorship, on demoniacal possessions, and on some other points with regard to which the Synod had not



formerly been satisfied. The explanations were so far satisfactory, that a motion was made, and carried by a majority of seven, to restore Mr Imrie to the exercise of his ministry. Twenty-one ministers and four elders protested against this decision.

When the Synod met in the month of April, the following year, a paper containing reasons of protest against the deed of their former meeting, restoring Mr Imrie to the exercise of his ministry, was read; and after some deliberation the Synod agreed to review the obnoxious sentence. A long discussion ensued, which terminated in the following motion being adopted: "The Synod considering that Mr Imrie, after being judicially found chargeable with error, was restored to the exercise of his office in the holy ministry, without any judgment of the court acquitting him of the charges under which he stood, or expressing their judicial satisfaction with the explanations he had given; without any explanations on his part, that he had retracted the errors found against him; without any profession of sorrow for the part he had acted, and without any pledge as to his future ministrations, they now proceed to consider what influence these and other facts should have on the sentence." After farther deliberation, the vote was then stated, "Reverse the sentence restoring Mr Imrie to the exercise of the office of the holy ministry, or Not?" when it carried by a large majority, "Reverse." From this deed nine ministers and one elder dissented.

During the interval which elapsed betwixt the former meeting of Synod and the present, Mr Imrie had been indulging his favourite propensity of making paradoxical statements from the pulpit. A committee had been appointed by the presbytery of Perth to investigate the subject; and the result of the precognition was, that a paper containing a variety of additional charges, on the ground of erroneous doctrine, was laid upon the Synod's table at their present meeting. This paper was referred to a committee, who were appointed to examine it, and to report how far it fur-

nished foundation for a libel. The committee extracted from it no fewer than fourteen articles, containing dangerous errors and expressions. These articles the presbytery of Perth were required to embody in a libel, with which Mr Imrie was to be served in due form ; and written answers were to be given by him to the different charges. The whole process, after being completed, was to be brought again before the Synod for a final decision.

In these articles, Mr Imrie was charged with affirming :—

1. That to say there are three persons in the Godhead, is a dangerous expression ; such as say so are right if they mean three modes of subsistence ; such as say, only one, are right if they mean only one agent or will.
2. That there were no distinct personal actings of the distinct persons of the Godhead in the making of the covenant of grace, on account of the unity of the divine will ; and that to maintain distinct personal actings in the making of the covenant, or in the application of redemption, is equivalent to the assertion of three Gods.
3. That there was no eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, with reference to the salvation of lost sinners ; but that it was made with Christ in time, as man, because he then had a will distinct from the divine ; that the Son made the covenant with the man Christ, as much as the Father and the Holy Ghost ; and there could be no covenant between the Father and the Son, on account of the unity of the divine will.
4. That the Father and the Son being equal in glory and dignity, and one in will, it is impossible that the Son could become the Father's servant.
5. That God could have brought all mankind to heaven, if he pleased, without a sacrifice.
6. That Christ is not the head of the church, but a member of her, the first man in her, or head in the church.
7. That Christ was not a priest from eternity ; that Melchisedec was a type of Christ, and the type must exist before the antitype.
8. That Christ was not Mediator, in fact, till the period of his incarnation, and his human nature itself was the Mediator.
9. That the human nature of Christ received no assistance

from God, when going through the work of our salvation ; and that Christ, in his sufferings, was supported by his own grace, and not by any special assistance from Omnipotence.

10. That reconciliation is not the reconciliation of God to sinners, but of sinners to God ; that the term *reconcile* signifies to change, or alter, which could not be applied to God ; and that it is unscriptural language to speak of God as being reconciled. 11. That we did not need a divine righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ as man ; and it is only his human righteousness that is imputed to us. 12. That the sin of the first Adam, and the righteousness of Christ, are imputed to persons only in their effects. 13. That Christ is only relatively God, but not really God. 14. That there are no degrees in mystery, and that the work of redemption is no more above reason, than the work of creation ; and that if we devote ourselves to the study of it, we may understand or comprehend it as much as farming or any other business.

After a long and tedious investigation of these charges, carried on during two successive meetings of Synod, it was found, in reference to the fifth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth articles, that no error had been proved against Mr Imrie, or confessed by him. With regard to all the other articles, it was found that he had used unguarded and unwarrantable language, and had taught doctrines at variance with the standards of the church. The whole business was terminated by a sentence of deposition being pronounced upon him. The sentence, and the grounds upon which it was pronounced, were embodied in the following motion, prepared by a committee, and which the Synod, after some discussion, adopted by a large majority :—

“ Whereas the Synod, at their meeting in April, 1809, found that Mr Imrie was chargeable with error, on the articles of Christ’s mediation and demoniacal possessions, and that he had used various expressions, particularly this,— ‘ How can God make a bargain with himself ? ’ which tended to mislead his hearers, and undermine the important doc-



trine of an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, as distinct parties : And whereas, notwithstanding Mr Imrie's professions of sorrow, submission to censure, and solemn promise of acting a different part, it was found, that after his restoration to office in April, 1810, he had, by his doctrine and modes of expressing himself in the pulpit, given occasion for a new process, in conducting which the Synod found, at their last meeting (August, 1811), That upon articles second and third, and seventh and ninth, of the libel, the doctrine advanced by Mr Imrie, with respect to the eternity of the covenant of grace and mediation of Christ, is inconsistent with the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the standards of the church ; and that, on article first, he had used improper and incautious modes of expression on the doctrine of the Trinity : And, at the present meeting, on article fourth, he is blameable for saying, ' That as the actings of the divine will in the Son cannot be ministerial and subordinate to those of the same will in the Father, therefore it behoved the Son to become man, that he might be a servant ; and that as one divine person cannot, in himself, even with his own consent, occupy a subordinate place or station to another, and cannot condescend to act in a subordinate character ; so the Son not only did not, but could not, become the servant of the Father, for any particular purpose respecting the salvation of sinners, but by becoming man ; and that their essential equality rendered any subordinate station, even by voluntary consent, impossible ; '—both of which declarations must, at first view, in the ordinary use of language, be considered as a denial of his acting in a subordinate character as the Father's servant, till invested with human nature : On article sixth, that he is blameable for seeming to represent the actual headship of our Lord as dependant on his actual incarnation, by teaching, ' That Christ is the head of the church, as in her and a part of her, her chief and principal member or part ; ' and saying, ' Our text does not view him as merely the Son, in which respect he has no God or head, but as God in our nature, as born in our na-

ture, as born in the church, concerning whom it may with propriety be said, *This man was born there*; and he is, by being so, the prime, the first man in her, because God-man, the heir and head:’ On article eighth, that Mr Imrie had taught, ‘That Christ could not be a priest but in our nature;’ and that he views Christ as ‘being a priest merely in purpose or design from eternity, in promise and type under the Old Testament dispensation, and in fact only under the New;’ and that he holds it as a principle, ‘That the whole of the mediatory office is nearly comprehended in Christ’s priestly function, thereby excluding almost all that he did either as a prophet or a king, from the execution of his mediatory office.’ Upon these grounds, although the other articles of libel be not proven, the Synod judge that Mr Imrie ought to be deprived of the ministerial office, and do therefore depose him from the office of the holy ministry, and suspend him from the fellowship of the church.”

In conformity with this sentence, Mr Imrie was solemnly deposed from the office of the ministry. After the sentence was pronounced upon him by the moderator, and suitable exhortations addressed to him, he stated, that he declined the authority of the Synod; that he considered the sentence as informal and injurious, and therefore null and void; and he protested against it, declaring that his connexion with the congregation of Kinkell was, notwithstanding it, valid, and that it should be no prejudice to his exercising his ministry there, or elsewhere, according to the openings of providence. Six ministers and two elders craved to have their dissent from this sentence of deposition marked in the Synod’s record.

Mr Imrie was considered by many to be an able and a faithful minister of the gospel, and the sentence pronounced upon him was regarded by his friends as unreasonably severe. He had an acute and a powerful mind, and seems to have been fond of making nice distinctions in theology. Taking the most favourable view of his case that it will admit of, his language, to say the least of it, was unguarded, and was

apparently much better calculated to perplex than to instruct. Some of his positions were sufficiently startling, and if they did not amount to positive heresy, they made a close approximation to it. He had acquired, in a high degree, the attachment of his people. They refused to acquiesce in the sentence of the Synod, dissolving the pastoral relation betwixt him and them. They left, nearly in a body, the communion of the Synod; and having erected a new place of worship in the village of Auchterarder, they continued to enjoy his ministrations till the close of his life.

While these proceedings, which have now been detailed, were in progress, the Synod kept steadily in view the extension of the Secession Church in Nova Scotia, and in the United States of America. Frequent applications were made to them by the churches on the other side of the Atlantic, to send out more labourers; and scarcely a meeting of Synod occurred, at which an attempt was not made to procure young men, who should be willing to undertake a transatlantic mission. Several disappointments were experienced, in consequence of individuals, to whom application was made, refusing to accept of a missionary appointment; but notwithstanding these disappointments, a respectable addition was made, in the course of a few years, to the Synod in America, and to the presbytery of Nova Scotia, by means of preachers sent from this country. Mr Joseph Shaw was ordained at Philadelphia in November, 1806, and Mr Gordon was settled in Prince Edward's Island, in the month of October, the year following. In May, 1809, Mr William Brownlee was ordained at Mount Pleasant, Bridgetown, and Mr Robert Bruce at Pittsburgh and Peter's Creek. These were followed in succession, across the Atlantic, by Mr John M'Kinlay, Mr John Liddell, Mr Peter Bullions, Mr Alexander Gordon, Mr John Donaldson, Mr John France, Mr Andrew Isaac, and Mr Duncan Campbell. The greater part, if not the whole, of the expense connected with these missions, was defrayed by congregational collections made in this country.



The Synod once and again reminded the churches in Nova Scotia, and in the United States, that it was their duty to contribute for the purpose of defraying the expense of these missions. These churches were now growing in wealth, and rising in importance, and they were able to bear at least a certain portion of the expense. The intimation thus given was not without effect. At one of their meetings, held during the year 1808, the Associate Presbytery of Pictou resolved to establish a fund for the advancement of religion. A considerable sum was collected by the congregations in connexion with the presbytery, and the sum of £90 was remitted to the mission fund of the Synod. At a subsequent period, when an application was made from the presbytery of the Carolinas for additional preachers to be sent out, it was stated, that they had provided funds for defraying the expense of the mission. A similar application being made, about the same time, from the Synod in America, they mentioned that they had appropriated the sum of five hundred dollars to defray the charges of the preachers who might be sent.

The brethren in Nova Scotia, having no hope of procuring an adequate supply of preachers from the mother country, began to entertain, in 1810, the idea of training ministers for themselves. One of them, writing to a friend on the subject, says,—“ We have begun as low as possible. Mr Ress has at present a young lad, begun to learn Latin, with a view to the ministry. We think we could raise finances for carrying on four students at a time, if their parents would help moderately. But we hardly expect to find students for some time; the thing is new here. Our plan is to appoint one of ourselves to teach them the languages, and, in place of lectures in philosophy, to collect a small library of books in history, and the most useful sciences; make them read these, and help them, by frequent examination and directions, to get as good a view of them as we can; and perhaps a few lectures on divinity. To accustom them to compose, we mean to give them subjects of discourse, from time to

time, beginning at an early period, and continuing all along." \*

At a meeting of the Associate Synod of Philadelphia, held at Cononsburgh, in May, 1811, the important question was discussed, Whether the *not holding* of slaves ought to be made a term of communion. Some insisted that this was a matter which belonged to the state. But after a long discussion, the following propositions were carried by a majority :—

I. That it is a moral evil to hold negroes, or their children in perpetual slavery, or to claim the right of buying and selling, or of bequeathing them as transferable property.

II. That all persons belonging to our communion, having slaves in their possession, be directed to set them at liberty, unless prohibited from doing so by the civil law ; but that, in those states where the liberation of slaves is rendered impracticable by the existing laws, it is the duty of masters to treat them with as much justice as if they were liberated ; to give them suitable food and clothing ; to have them taught to read, and instructed in the principles of religion ; and, when their service may justly deserve it, to give them additional compensation.

III. That slave-holders who refuse to renounce the above claim, and to treat their slaves in the manner now specified, are unworthy of being admitted into, or retained in the fellowship of the church of Christ.

IV. That it may be lawful for persons in our communion to purchase negroes from those who are holding them in perpetual slavery, with a view to retain them in their service until they are recompensed for the money laid out in the purchase of said slaves, provided it be done with the consent of the negroes themselves, treating them in the mean time according to the second regulation.

V. That it is the special duty of sessions to see that the above regulations be faithfully acted upon ; but before they can be acted upon by any session, care shall be taken, in

\* Christian Magazine. New Series. Vol. v. p. 113.

every congregation where the application of them is requisite, not only to have the people apprized, but instructed, in the moral evil of the slave-holding here contemplated.\*

The congregations in Nova Scotia, in connexion with the General Associate Synod of this country, now began to adopt measures with a view to effect a union with the other presbyterian congregations in that province. After some time spent in making the preliminary arrangements, this desirable object was accomplished in the spring of 1818. The three presbyterian denominations, consisting of ministers from the Church of Scotland, and from the two leading branches of the Secession, constituted themselves into a Synod, under the designation of "The Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia." The United Church was divided at first into three presbyteries; and some time afterward, a fourth was added. Intelligence of this event was communicated to the General Synod, at their meeting in May 1818; and, after having duly considered the grounds on which the union had been effected, they agreed in making a declaration, that, though they had "some serious difficulties" with respect to certain articles in the Formula submitted to their consideration, yet they were sufficiently aware that no church in a newly settled country can be expected to be brought all at once to a high degree of perfection; and they found nothing in the constitution of the presbyterian church of Nova Scotia which prohibited them from co-operating with these brethren "in the great work of propagating the principles of religion, and advancing the cause of Christ."

Soon after the process against Mr Imrie was terminated, an overture was introduced into the Synod, which occupied their attention at successive meetings. This overture had for its object the simplifying of the process of covenanting, by declaring the reading of the national covenants on these occasions to be unnecessary, and by altering the form as well as abridging the length of the Acknowledgment of Sins, which document was considered by some to be too prolix,

\* Christian Magazine. New Series, vol. v. p. 408.



and to resemble too closely a liturgy or form of prayer. Before the discussions on this subject were brought to a close, the Synod ceased to exist as a separate association, being called upon to unite with their brethren of the Associate Synod. During the progress of these discussions, a new edition of the Testimony was required ; and it was unanimously agreed to omit, in this edition, an obnoxious paragraph in the eighteenth chapter of the Testimony. In this paragraph it was declared, that the Synod were of the same opinion with the Associate Presbytery, “ That the Solemn League and Covenant was, *for the matter just and warrantable, for the ends necessary and commendable, and for the time seasonable*; and, therefore, in acknowledging the obligation of the covenants of their ancestors, they made no exception as to any part of their matter ;” the objection to this declaration was, that it seemed to imply an approbation of the civil as well as the religious part of the Solemn League and Covenant, which they considered it incompetent for them, as an ecclesiastical court, to give. By omitting the objectionable paragraph, they swept away the last shred of any thing in their public documents, which seemed to imply an approbation of civil pains and penalties in matters of religion.

Among the last <sup>\*</sup>acts of the General Associate Synod, previous to their uniting with their brethren, was the appointment of some of their number to itinerate in the Highlands of Argyleshire and Perthshire. They also gave a favourable reception to an application made to them from the Irish Evangelical Society, to send some of their preachers to itinerate in Ireland, under the direction of that society. They further recommended, that a collection be made in their several congregations, in aid of the funds of that institution. By such useful and honourable acts as these, did they show that the spirit of christian zeal and liberality which prompted them, at an early period of their history, to send preachers of the gospel to foreign lands, continued to animate them till the close of their career, as a distinct religious association.

I have now reviewed the proceedings of the General As-

sociate Synod, from its commencement till the year 1819, when its table was loaded with petitions from its numerous congregations, soliciting measures to be adopted with a view to a union with their brethren of the Associate Synod, from whom they had now been separated for a period of more than seventy years. As the measures which were adopted with a view to the accomplishing of this memorable union, were common to both Synods, I shall reserve the detail of them, till I give an account of the proceedings of the Associate Synod, where the two streams of the Secession History shall again unite into one, and shall be seen rolling onward in a broad and deep channel from the period of the union in 1820, till the present time.

## HISTORY OF THE ASSOCIATE (OR BURGHER) SYNOD.

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### CHAPTER VI.

First meeting of Burgher Synod. Committee appointed to prepare an explication of the Shorter Catechism. Petition from societies for sermon. Answers delayed. Fast appointed on account of the breach. Mr E. Erskine receives temporary charge of the Students. Proposal to enlarge the Psalmody. Ministers sent to preach in Ireland. Mr Fisher chosen Professor of Divinity. Publication of Fisher's Catechism. Privy censures appointed. Formula of questions proposed on these occasions to elders. Formula of questions proposed to ministers. Case of casuistry. Episcopacy condemned. Remarks. Mr Matthew of Midholm joins the Synod. Presbytery of Down formed in Ireland. Troubles of the Irish brethren. Encouragement given to the brethren by the Synod. Death of Mr Ralph Erskine. His character. His loss lamented by the Synod. Act concerning scope and design of the Testimony. Cases of insubordination on the part of preachers. Case of Mr. Wylie. Case of Mr Forrest. Last illness of Mr Ebenezer Erskine. His death. And character. Mourned by the Synod. Mr Thomas Clark missioned to America. Prevented from going. Douglas a tragedy, written by Mr Home. Represented on the Edinburgh stage. Theatre attended by several ministers of the National Church. Discipline inflicted on them. Mr Carlyle proves refractory. Libelled. And censured. General Assembly caution ministers against attending the theatre. Associate Synod testify against encouragement given to the theatre by ministers. Formula of questions proposed to presbyteries at privy censures. Proceedings of Synod concerning covenanting.

AFTER the separation, occasioned by the burgess-oath controversy, the Associate Burgher Synod held its first meeting at Stirling on the 16th of June, 1747. Mr James Mair, minister at West Linton, who had been elected moderator before the separation took place, opened the meeting by



preaching a sermon from Isaiah viii. 17 ; “ And I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.” The following ministers and elders were present on this occasion :—Of the presbytery of Dunfermline, Messrs Ralph Erskine, Dunfermline ; and James Johnstone, Dundee, ministers ; with John Wardlaw from Dunfermline, ruling elder : Of the presbytery of Glasgow, Messrs Ebenezer Erskine, Stirling ; James Fisher, Glasgow ; David Horn, Cambusnethan ; Henry Erskine, Falkirk ; John M'Cara, Kilbarchan ; Andrew Black, Cumbernauld ; Andrew Thomson,\* Mearns ; David Telfar, Bridge of Teith, ministers ; with Robert Paterson from Stirling ; Andrew Glen from Glasgow ; Robert Kedder from Cambusnethan ; John Anderson from Falkirk ; and John Fisher from Bridge of Teith, ruling elders : Of the presbytery of Edinburgh, Messrs James Mair, West Linton ; William Hutton, Stow ; John Smith, Jedburgh, ministers ; with Messrs John Mowbray from Edinburgh ; Archibald Hall from West Linton ; and William Manderston from Haddington, ruling elders. Mr Thomas Sommerville, minister at Newcastle, though not present at this meeting, continued to adhere to the Synod.

Mr James Fisher was chosen moderator ; and Mr Daniel Cock, clerk of the Glasgow presbytery, was unanimously appointed to act as clerk to the Synod, though he was not a member of court.†

At this and some of the subsequent meetings, the attention of the Synod was much occupied with matters originating in the unhappy division that had taken place : to these a reference has been made in a preceding part of the narrative. They renewed an appointment, formerly given, to the different presbyteries to prepare an explication of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. The chief burden of this work

\* Mr Thomson soon after this withdrew from the Synod, and connected himself with his brethren of the Associate Antiburgher Synod.

† Mr Cock was afterwards ordained at Greenock, and finally went to America.

devolved upon Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Mr Fisher. Several applications were laid upon their table from societies in different parts of the country, requesting advice “in their present circumstances,” and a supply of sermon. The Synod delayed giving an immediate answer to these applications ; and, in the meantime, as they had few preachers on their list, they appointed Messrs Thomas Clark, Thomas Main, and James Wright, students of divinity, to be entered on trials for licence by the presbytery of Glasgow.

One of the petitions, presented to the Synod at this meeting, called forth from them a strong expression of satisfaction. This was a petition from the associate congregation of Carrick and Galloway, earnestly beseeching the Synod, “in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, to sue after peace with their protesting brethren, and in order to obtain this, to propose meetings with them for prayer and conversation, and other expedient means for obtaining peace in a way of truth.” In answer to this petition, the Synod promised “to use all proper means for procuring peace, upon the footing of truth, among the Lord’s ministers and people whom he had divided in his just displeasure.”

The Synod being left destitute of a Theological Professor, in consequence of Mr Alexander Moncrieff having adhered to the other portion of the Secession, this subject was taken into consideration at a meeting, held at Dunfermline, in the beginning of September this same year. It was recommended to Mr Fisher that he should turn his attention to the subject, with a view to his being appointed to fill the Theological chair ; and, in the meantime, the students of divinity were placed under the charge of Mr Ebenezer Erskine at Stirling. At this meeting, the Synod appointed a day of fasting to be observed in all their congregations, on account of the late “melancholy and awful rupture that had fallen out in adorable providence among the ministers and people of the association.” They met again in the following month (October) at Glasgow, when a petition was presented from some individuals in London, craving that the Synod would

take them under their superintendence, and send them a supply of sermon; and requesting in an especial manner that Mr John Potts might be sent to labour amongst them for a season. Mr Ralph Erskine was appointed to write to the people in London, informing them that their petition for sermon would be taken into consideration at a future meeting; and as Mr Potts had received a call from the congregation of Dalkeith, they enjoined the presbytery of Edinburgh to take the ordinary steps, with a view to his immediate settlement in that place.

At a meeting of the Synod held at Stirling on the 12th of April, 1748, it was resolved, that, according to the practice of the Church of Scotland in her purest times, both presbyterial and synodical privy-censures should be commenced. It was recommended to the several presbyteries, to suggest such questions as might be suitable to be put on these occasions; and they were further enjoined to send up the records of their proceedings, from the first formation of the Synod, that they might undergo examination. The Synod, being desirous to enlarge the psalmody, requested Mr Ralph Erskine to undertake a translation into metre of the Songs in Scripture, with the exception of the psalms of David. A committee, formerly appointed to prepare a formula of questions to be put to students at receiving licence, and to probationers at their ordination, was renewed, and they were required to present a draught of questions at an early meeting of Synod. A proposal was made that a committee be appointed, "to inquire into some historical mistakes which are alleged to be in the Act and Testimony, and other papers published by the Associate Presbytery; and to show the true meaning of some other parts of the said Testimony and papers, which are misrepresented and perverted at this day." This proposal was adopted; and Messrs Ralph Erskine, James Fisher, and Henry Erskine, were appointed a committee for the purposes specified. At a subsequent meeting, this committee was enlarged by the addition to it of Messrs Ebenezer Erskine, James Fisher, William Hutton, David



Horn, John M'Cara, and James Main ; and the task was devolved upon Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine to prepare what was called a *materia substrata* for the committee to work upon. Before separating, the Synod agreed that a day of fasting and humiliation should be again observed by the people under their charge. In the reasons assigned by them, for calling upon their people to engage in this exercise, they gave a particular prominence to the unhappy division that had taken place in the Secession, as indicative of the divine displeasure. The Act of Synod, authorizing the fast, commences with a solemn reference to the "awful judgments, especially of a spiritual nature, which the Lord hath been, and is, inflicting upon us ; and whereby he hath given manifold tokens of his righteous wrath and displeasure against the whole land in general, and particularly against a remnant of ministers and people, who have been professing to bear witness for him, in a way of Secession ; and, especially, in that he hath, at this day, so greatly divided this remnant in his anger, and covered them with a very thick cloud ; and is still continuing in so great a measure to pour forth his fury, in this respect, like fire ; and to burn against Jacob like a flaming fire which devoureth round about."

This same year, the Synod, in answer to applications formerly made to them, agreed to grant a supply of sermon to societies, who were associated for this purpose in different parts of the country. They also sent some of their number to preach in Ireland. At this period there were three congregations in that country, that received from them a regular supply of sermon ; these were Killenny, Ballerenny and Ballibea. Mr John Swanston, a young man of considerable promise, and who was afterwards chosen Professor of Divinity by the Synod, received a call from each of the two congregations first mentioned ; but a call being given him at the same time by the congregation of Kinross in Scotland, the Synod appointed him to be ordained at Kinross. Messrs David Telfar of Bridge of Teith, John Smith of Jedburgh, and Andrew Black of Cumbernauld were appointed to labour

in succession, each for several weeks, among the Irish congregations. In the following year, Mr Telfar received a call from the congregation of Ballibea; but when the matter came before the supreme court for decision, they thought proper to continue him in his charge at Bridge of Teith. A call given at the same time to Mr Black, by the congregation of Killenny, was more successful, for the Synod sanctioned his removal from Cumbernauld.

While the Synod were thus actively engaged in re-organizing those congregations which had been shattered by the breach that had taken place, and in forming new ones where they had not previously existed, they showed a laudable anxiety for the improvement of the young men who were training up for the ministry. At their meeting in October, 1748, they appointed all the students in philosophy and divinity to be examined once every year, by their respective presbyteries, that they might mark the progress which they were making in their studies. They also recommended to the congregations under their charge, to renew their annual collections for supporting the students, and for other public purposes.

Mr Ebenezer Erskine having intimated that he felt himself unable any longer to continue, through the infirmities of age, his prelections to the students of divinity, Mr James Fisher was unanimously elected Theological Professor, on the 7th September, 1749, and the students were required to assemble at Glasgow on the 1st of February, the following year. A reference has already been made to the appointment of a committee by the Synod, to prepare an exposition, in the form of question and answer, of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism. This work was executed by Mr E. Erskine, as far as that question in the Catechism, "How doth Christ execute the office of a priest?" when he stated to the Synod, at their meeting in May, 1750, that he was obliged to desist from a work of such difficulty and fatigue, owing to increasing infirmity, and the heavy load of labour imposed upon him by the superintendence of an extensive

congregation. The Synod requested him to complete that portion of the work which he had commenced, by giving the exposition of the question, "How doth Christ execute the office of a king?" And the remaining part of the Catechism was divided among the three presbyteries. The brethren connected with the presbytery of Dunfermline were required to prepare an exposition from the question now mentioned to the third commandment inclusive. That portion extending from the third commandment to the question, "What is repentance unto life?" was assigned to the brethren of the presbytery of Glasgow; and the remaining portion was allotted to the presbytery of Edinburgh.

Though the pens of several ministers were employed in this useful work, yet Messrs Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, and Mr Fisher, were entrusted with the revisal and correcting of the whole; so that, when completed, it might have a uniformity of style and method. With the exception of Mr Fisher, none of these excellent individuals lived to see this work completed. It was published successively in two parts. The first part was published in the beginning of 1753, and contains an exposition of that portion of the Catechism, which states the doctrines we are required to believe concerning God, and terminates with the question, "What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?" Mr Ralph Erskine died a short while before this part issued from the press, and his brother Ebenezer died soon after the publication of it. The second part of the work, containing the exposition of those questions which teach the duty that God requires of man, was not published till seven years after the first. After the death of the two Erskines (Ebenezer and Ralph), the Synod, by a renewed recommendation, entrusted the preparation of the second part to Mr Fisher. Though he was furnished with materials by several of his brethren, yet the chief burden of the work lay upon himself. In the preface prefixed to the second part, Mr Fisher informs us, that this portion was neither read nor judicially sanctioned (as the first had been) by the Synod; but was published by



him, on his own responsibility ; and he modestly observes concerning it,—“ Any imperfections or weaknesses that may be found therein, are not to be imputed to the body of ministers, with whom I am, in providence, connected ; but to myself only.” I have been thus particular in noticing the origin and progress of this excellent exposition of the Shorter Catechism, because the Synod, in originating such a work, rendered essential service not only to their own church, but to the religious world. I know not if there be in the English language a more useful publication, for conveying, in a simple form, to the minds both of young and old, clear and Scriptural views of the whole system of revealed truth.\*

The Synod having enjoined both sessions and presbyteries to observe privy-censures, it was necessary to have a form of questions suitable for being proposed to elders and ministers on these occasions. The following were the questions which the Synod appointed to be put to elders, when the session was convened for the exercise of privy censure :—

1. Have you the worship of God in your family, in all the parts of it, morning and evening every day ?

2. Do you study to have a grave, sober, pious, and exemplary walk and conversation in your family, and before the world, as it becometh your office and station ?

3. Do you not reprove all vice, and discourage all appearance of evil in your family, and do what in you lies to cause every one in your house to fear the Lord ?

4. Do you endeavour to be exemplary in the religious observance of the Lord's day, in the public, private, and secret exercises of God's worship ; and do you examine your family, in the Sabbath evenings, upon what they have heard in public, and upon the principles of our religion, contained in our catechisms ?

5. Do you visit the sick in your bounds, and pray over them, especially when called thereunto ?

6. Do you inquire into the moral character and behaviour

\* This work is usually known by the name of “ Fisher's Catechism.”

of those of the congregation that are within your bounds, if they attend upon ordinances, have the worship of God in their families, and be of a blameless walk ?

7. When you are informed of any scandal, are you at pains to make diligent inquiry into the truth of the report, in a private way ; and when you find out the truth, do you speak to the offending party, or parties, by themselves, before you delate them to the session ?

8. When offences are entirely private, and not known but to a few, do you use your endeavours to have them removed, to the satisfaction of these few, before you bring them to a more public hearing, after your private endeavours have had no success ?

9. Do you make conscience of attending meetings of session, for the exercise of discipline and distributions to the poor, and likewise for prayer and christian conference ?

10. Do you inquire into the state of the poor within your bounds, and apply for their relief, as you know their necessity requires ?

11. Do you take care to inquire for testimonials from those who come to reside within your bounds from other places ?

12. Do you endeavour, as in the sight of God, without regard either to the pleasing or displeasing of men, to be conscientious and impartial in the exercise of discipline, and in giving your judgment and vote upon any matter of doctrine, or case of conscience, which may be handled either in the session, presbytery, or synod, whereof you may be a member ?

13. Do you make conscience of, and are you impartial in, the distribution of tokens for admission to the Lord's table : Do you give tokens to any but such as you know to be of a conversation becoming the gospel ; and do you admit any but such as are known to be so ?

14. Do you carefully avoid divulging what passes among the members of session, when giving their minds in matters that come before them, which are not fit to be published,

and particularly when cognoscing upon the moral characters of such as are to be admitted to the Lord's table?

The Synod appointed the following form of interrogation to be observed with regard to ministers, when they were assembled for the purpose of privy-censure. The questions will be admitted to be sufficiently pointed and minute:—

1. Do you worship God in your family, by singing his praises, reading a part of his word, and praying morning and evening: And do you the same in any family where you happen in providence to be lodged, as there is access?

2. Do you catechise and instruct your family in the principles of religion, commonly once a-week?

3. Do you use your endeavour to cause every one of your family to pray in secret, morning and evening, to remember the Lord's day to keep it holy, and to have a conversation becoming the gospel?

4. Do you study, through grace, by an holy and circumspect walk, to be an example to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you an overseer, and to encourage grave and savoury discourse, to the use of edifying, in all companies where you are in providence?

5. Have you a session, and has every one of your elders certain bounds assigned to them in the congregation, that so they may more easily visit the sick, and inspect the morals of the people?

6. Do you, in connexion with your session, study to exercise discipline impartially, without respect of persons; and, with respect to private offences, do you observe the rule (Matthew xviii. 15), to tell offending parties their fault privately, before they be brought to the session?

7. Do you not pretend to usurp a negative over your brethren in the session, but do you labour to moderate therein with calmness and meekness, as it becomes a servant of Christ, who is not to lord it over any part of God's heritage?

8. Have you a session register, and do you take care that the minutes of session be revised by a committee thereof,



and recorded in the said register ; and have you a register of the collections and distributions for the poor, and of the time of baptisms and marriages within your congregation ?

9. Do you, and the other members of your session, meet for prayer and christian conference, at least once a-month ; and do the members of session undergo privy censure, at least once a-year, according to the laudable practice of this church ?

10. Do you keep uniformity with your brethren in the public worship of God, lecturing and preaching commonly on the forenoon of the Lord's day, and preaching in the afternoon, together with prayer and praise, according to the custom and directory of this church, agreeably to the word of God ?

11. Do you keep any sermon in your congregation, commonly on some work day, beside the Sabbath ? \*

12. Do you preach catechetical doctrine, as recommended by the assemblies of this church ?

13. Do you study to preach the gospel plainly to the capacity of your people, and to apply your doctrine to their consciences, and to establish them in the present truth, in opposition to the errors of the times ?

14. Do you endeavour to give seasonable and faithful warning and testimony against the sins and scandals that take place in your congregation, and against the public corruptions and defections of the times, without lessening or extenuating those evils, to your knowledge, either for pleasing men, or from fear of their displeasure ?

15. Do you, study, through grace, when you preach the gospel to others, to apply it to, and to have the sense and impression of it upon, your own soul ?

16. In preaching upon the duties of the law, do you take care to discover to your people their utter inability and unwillingness to perform any acceptable duty, without a principle of spiritual life and union with the Lord Jesus, as the only spring of all true holiness ?

17. In preaching the doctrines of grace, do you not show

\* This question was intended only for the ministers of town charges.

to your people that the said doctrine does by no means encourage any to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, but on the contrary to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?

18. Do you give yourself to reading, and do you endeavour, in the use of prayer and meditation, deliberately to study the Lord's mind in his word, before you deliver it to the people, when you have time and opportunity to do so, and not to deliver unpremeditated and unstudied discourses, except upon an unforeseen and particular call in Providence?

19. Are you frequently at a throne of grace, seeking of the Lord, not only the gift of prayer and preaching, but the grace of them, that you may be successful in winning souls to Christ, and that you may finish your course with joy, and the ministry which you have received of the Lord?

20. Do you visit your congregation in a ministerial way, by exhortation and prayer from house to house, once every year, or as often as your circumstances will permit.\*

21. Do you visit the sick in your congregation, especially when called thereto, and do you pray over them?

22. Do you examine the people of your congregation at public diets (without respect of persons), upon the principles of religion contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, once every year?

23. Do you administer the sacrament of baptism in an orderly way, after sermon, on the Lord's day, or upon a week day, when public intimation is made of sermon or catechising, the Sabbath before, when you have not a stated week day's sermon; and do you avoid private baptism, according to the laudable acts and constitution of this church?

24. Do you administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in your congregation, at least once every year?

25. Are you and the session careful to keep back the ignorant and scandalous from that holy ordinance?

\* The alternative allowed in this question was intended to apply to those congregations in the country that were widely scattered throughout several parishes.

26. Are you concerned to know, as far as you can, the spiritual state and condition of your flock, by their knowledge and practice, so as that hereby you may be enabled to apply yourself more closely to their soul's case, both in public and private?

27. Have your session the Bible and Confession of Faith ready at hand, when they constitute, as also a copy of the Acts of Assembly, from 1638 to 1650, and since that time; and do you regulate your proceedings in discipline agreeably to these Acts, in as far as they were passed for advancing and carrying on a covenanted reformation, agreeably to the word of God, and the received principles and constitutions of the Church of Scotland?

The above questions show us what were the duties which the Secession Church required of its office-bearers at that period. They show us also how anxious the Synod were that both ministers and elders should be faithful in the performance of these duties. Though there are some things adverted to in these questions, not at all suited to the circumstances of the Secession Church in the present day, yet, viewed as a whole, they furnish an excellent directory for guiding ministers and elders in the performance of those duties incumbent on them as office-bearers of the christian church.

A case of discipline came under the consideration of the Associate Synod, in October 1750, which deserves to be recorded, as showing what were the sentiments entertained, at that period, concerning episcopacy, by the ministers and people of the Secession, in common with their brethren in the Established Church of Scotland. A mason, of the name of Andrew Hunter, who was a member of the associate congregation in Glasgow, had undertaken, and had commenced building an episcopal chapel in that city. His conduct gave great offence to the members of the congregation with which he was connected, as well as to some other of the inhabitants of the town, who had heard that a person professing to be a Seceder was engaged in such an undertaking. Andrew was



dealt with privately, by his minister (Mr Fisher), and several members of session, to renounce the work, and yielded at first so far to their arguments and solicitations, that he promised to use his endeavour to get himself disengaged from it; but he was either unable or unwilling to fulfil his promise, for he still persevered in the work, and he was cited to appear before the session. The first and second summons was disregarded; but a third citation being given, he appeared and declared that he had withdrawn from the congregation, and no longer owed subjection to the judicatories of the Secession Church. The session made use of a variety of arguments, in order to bring him to a better state of mind; but to no purpose. Andrew declared that his resolution was immoveably fixed to proceed with the work. He was asked if he “would lie open to light” in the matter; to which he replied he would not, and that it was needless for the session to give themselves any farther trouble.

The case was deemed to be of such importance, that it was referred to the presbytery; and, as the culprit did not choose to obey the summons given him to appear at the bar of the presbytery, the whole matter came before the supreme court for its decision. After mature deliberation, the Synod recorded the following deliverance on this subject:—

“The Synod, considering that the building of an episcopal meeting-house for the worship and ceremonies of the Church of England, was at least equal to the building of the high places mentioned in the Old Testament, where, though sacrifices were pretended to be offered to the true God, yet they were offered on other altars than the altar of the Lord in his temple, quite contrary to his institution, prohibiting sacrifices to be offered any where else; therefore does the Spirit of God record a censure upon some of the kings of Judah, that though they had other commendable qualities, yet nevertheless the high places were not taken away; and considering that, by the second commandment, we are required to receive, observe, keep pure and entire such religious worship and ordinances as God hath

appointed in his word, and are forbidden to worship God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word; and that the ceremonies of the Church of England are superstitious devices and innovations upon the worship of God, forbidden in that commandment, and that God is most jealous, and takes strict notice of any innovation upon his worship (1 Kings xii. 32, 33), and threatens to punish all such, in a most severe manner, who innovate upon his worship, or set up their own inventions in the room thereof, or are assistant to those that do so (Isaiah lxv. 11, 12); and, in case it should be alleged, that workmen who receive hire from others are not to be blamed in the pursuit of their calling, but those who employ them; therefore, the Spirit of God records a censure even upon workmen who take such employment in hand, as to contribute their skill in accommodating those who are for setting up a false worship (Isaiah xlv. 10, 11): And further considering that, by the National Covenant of Scotland, and by the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, we are bound to reform from popery, prelacy, superstition, and whatever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, and to endeavour the preservation of the reformed religion of the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government; and that Seceders, in a particular manner, profess to own these solemn obligations; and that the said Andrew Hunter, by his above practice, is so far from endeavouring reformation from prelacy and superstition, that he is encouraging the same, contrary to his profession and solemn ties; therefore, for all the above reasons, the Synod were unanimously of the judgment, that the said Andrew Hunter was highly censurable, and particularly that he ought not to be admitted to any of the seals of the covenant, till he profess his sorrow for the offence and scandal that he has given, and been guilty of. And the Synod are of opinion that, though this censure is not so explicit and formal as the nature of his offence and contumacy would deserve, yet, that a public intimation hereof, in the associate congregation of Glasgow, by way of a testimony against the

above practice, may at present answer the ends of edification in the circumstantiated case, especially at such a juncture as this, when the discipline of the house of God is rendered contemptible by the extravagant heights into which the separatists have run; and, farther, the Synod advise that the Associate presbytery of Glasgow make inquiry into the success of this intimation, with respect to the foresaid Andrew Hunter, and that they may proceed to farther censure, or not, as they shall see cause."

Should any be inclined to smile at the above decision, as a specimen of testimony-bearing, carried to an unreasonable length, such ought to remember that popery and prelacy were regarded (whether justly or not I shall not take upon me to determine), as twin sisters, not only by the Seceders, but by the great bulk of presbyterians at that period; and those persons who gave any countenance either to the one or to the other, whether directly or indirectly, were considered as violating their covenant obligations, and as acting inconsistently with their profession as christians. But times and opinions are now changed. Episcopacy, especially if it appear in the form of an establishment, nowhere meets with such eloquent and zealous defenders, as it does among the leading Scottish presbyterians who live in our day. It is pronounced by those who boast themselves the descendants of the intrepid covenanters, to be one of the main supports of the christian faith; and to attempt a reformation in any part of its time-worn fabric, is regarded as a species of sacrilege fitted to draw down the wrath of heaven upon those who shall be guilty of such daring conduct.

At the same meeting of Synod which determined Andrew Hunter's case, a request was presented in the name of Mr Patrick Matthew, minister at Midholm, that he might be permitted to make a statement to the court. Permission being granted, Mr Matthew read a paper, in which he expressed his contrition for the part which he had acted at, and since the period of, the rupture in the Associate Synod. He craved forgiveness, and begged leave to re-occupy his seat.



in the Synod, promising all due subjection in the Lord. Mr Matthew having read his paper, laid it upon the table, and retired. After some deliberation, the Synod agreed that Mr Matthew be rebuked by the moderator, “ for the several pieces of his offensive deportment mentioned in said paper, and that he be admonished to stedfastness in the Lord’s cause and way for the future;” and thereafter, that he be permitted to take his seat as a member of court. Mr Matthew being called in, expressed his willingness to submit. He was accordingly rebuked and admonished by the moderator, and took his seat among the brethren.

The exertions of the Synod, in sending the gospel to Ireland, were attended with a considerable degree of success. In the summer of 1751, they were enabled to form a presbytery in that country. It was designated the “ Associate Presbytery of Down,” and consisted, at its first formation, of three ministers, with their elders.\* An application was made, this same year, to the Synod, from a number of persons residing in Philadelphia, in the province of Pennsylvania, North America, who were very desirous that a preacher should be sent to them. But however willing the Synod were to comply with the request of their American brethren, they found themselves unable, as yet, to undertake a mission across the Atlantic, on account of the scarcity of preachers, and the urgent demands made for their labours at home. This application from America was renewed in the following year (April 1752), and was accompanied with a promise that all expenses connected with the mission would be cheerfully defrayed. The Synod delayed giving an answer till a subsequent meeting. Petitions were laid upon their table, at the same time, from societies in London, and from the presbytery in Ireland, representing “ their melancholy condition through want of the gospel, and ordinances thereof, dispensed by any with whom they had freedom to

\* The three ministers connected with this presbytery were Messrs Andrew Black, Killenny ; Thomas Clark, Ballibea ; and Thomas Main, Ballerenny.

join," and craving that a supply of preachers might be sent as speedily as possible. Mr James Erskine, who a short while before this, had been ordained colleague to his uncle Ebenezer in Stirling, was sent on a mission for two months to London, and a promise was given to the Irish presbytery that one or two young men would be sent to them as soon as they were licensed.

When the Synod met in October (1752), their attention was called to the troubles in which the congregations in Ireland were involved, in consequence of both ministers and people being required by the underlings of government to swear oaths which were considered ensnaring, and to swear them in a form of which their consciences disapproved. The objectionable form was, according to technical phraseology, *Tactis et deosculatis evangelis*.\* Those who refused to take the oaths, in the manner required, were threatened with imprisonment. The Synod took up the case of the Irish brethren with great promptitude; and they agreed that if any of them should be imprisoned for conscience sake, they would contribute to the utmost of their power for their support during the whole period of their imprisonment. Two years afterward, these brethren renewed their application for the interference of the Synod in this matter. A request was presented, that the Synod would endeavour to procure, with all possible speed, credentials from some of the peers and principal town councils in Scotland, to attest the loyalty of the Seceders in Ireland; that they would also grant them pecuniary assistance in defraying the expenses which had already been, or might still be, incurred in the prosecutions to which they were subjected for conscience sake; and that they would farther send one of their number to give them advice as to the course of procedure which they ought to pursue in their present circumstances. The Synod lent a favourable ear to this appeal. They appointed Mr John M'Cara, minister at Burntshields, to proceed to Ireland,

\* By touching and kissing the gospels.

and to take along with him credentials of the attachment of the Irish brethren to the civil government of the country. As he expected to obtain money in Ireland, they authorised him to apply to the relief of these brethren such a sum as might be necessary in the present juncture of affairs; and whatever sum might be expended by him for this purpose, the Synod agreed should be paid to him on his return. He was specially enjoined to examine into the state of matters among the Seceders in Ireland, and to report to the Synod the result of his investigations. In addition to this proof which they gave of their sympathy with their brethren in the sister kingdom, they resolved that they would make every effort to obtain for them a speedy deliverance from the difficulties in which they were involved.

In the midst of these transactions, the Secession Church sustained a severe loss in the unexpected removal of Mr Ralph Erskine from this earthly scene. He expired at Dunfermline, after a short illness, on the 6th of November, 1752, in the sixty-eighth year of his age. This eminent minister has left behind him, in his writings, both in prose and poetry, a lasting monument of his talents and his piety. It has been seen, in a preceding part of this narrative, that he connected himself with the Associate Presbytery at an early period of its existence. In all the labours and struggles of the Secession, during its infancy, he bore a prominent share; and, by his exertions, both in the pulpit and from the press, he contributed, in no small degree, to promote its success. His writings have been highly esteemed by the pious, both in our own, and in other lands. The most honourable testimonies have been borne to their excellence and their usefulness by persons of all religious denominations. So long as the English language shall exist, so long shall his discourses be perused with interest and with profit by those who have a relish for the doctrines of the gospel. He was distinguished for the highly evangelical strain of his preaching. To magnify the grace of God, in the salvation of sinners, was the grand object at which he aimed in his pulpit ministrations.



He lived and died under the influence of the doctrines which he taught. During the long period of his ministry (extending to about forty years), he took an active interest in those great questions connected with ecclesiastical polity, and the maintenance of sound doctrine, which agitated Scotland, both before and after the commencement of the Secession. His latter end was peace. Though he was prevented by the nature of his disease (a nervous fever), from saying much in his last illness, yet he gave sufficient evidence, by occasional expressions which he uttered, that he enjoyed, at his departing hour, the consolations of that gospel which he had so faithfully preached. Among the last words which he was heard to utter, were, "I will be for ever a debtor to free grace." And he breathed out his immortal spirit exclaiming, "Victory, victory, victory."\*

His death was mourned by the Associate Synod as a public loss. At their first meeting after this event had taken place (May 1753), they made special mention of it in their minutes, as a cause of humiliation; and having agreed, according to custom, to spend a part of a sederunt in prayer and praise, the brethren, who were appointed to conduct the devotional exercises of the Synod, were enjoined to take particular notice in their prayers of "this awful providence of God."

A short while before his death, Mr Erskine had completed his translation of the Scripture Songs into metre, according to the appointment of Synod formerly noticed. The first draught of them, however, had been written in short hand, and it had been recommended to Mr Erskine to get them transcribed into a legible hand. A committee was at the same time appointed to hear them read, and to report concerning them to the Synod. But before the committee had time to fulfil their appointment, Mr Erskine died, and the Synod did not think proper to take any farther steps in the

\* Life and Diary of the Rev. Ralph Erskine, by the Rev. Donald Fraser, D. D. Kennoway, p. 381, 382. The reader will find in this excellent memoir some interesting notices of the rise and progress of the Secession.

matter. The Scripture Songs were afterwards published as part of Mr Erskine's works, but without receiving any official sanction from the Synod.

In November, 1753, the Synod, at a meeting held at Stirling, gave their sanction to a document of some length, which a committee had, for a considerable time, been engaged in preparing. This document, after being carefully revised, was ordered to be published under the title of an *Act of the Associate Synod, containing a narrative of the rise, progress, and grounds of their Secession: Together with a Declaration of the true scope and design thereof; as also of their Act, Declaration, and Testimony, &c.* The first part of the act contains an outline of those historical facts connected with the rise and progress of the Secession, which have been more fully detailed in this narrative; and the second part contains a declaration of the views, which the Associate Synod entertained concerning the various parts of the Narrative and Testimony, and other official documents of the Secession Church. The object of the publication of this act was two-fold: First, to make the people well acquainted with the grounds of the Secession; and, secondly, to vindicate themselves against misrepresentations, on the part of their opponents. They endeavoured to show, that a meaning had been affixed to some portions of these documents, which a fair interpretation of them did not warrant. The same committee, by whom this act had been framed, had also prepared, in connexion with it, an overture relative to the mistakes which were alleged to be in the Act and Testimony, but the Synod delayed the consideration of this overture till a future meeting, and the following persons were appointed a committee to revise and correct it, viz. Messrs James Fisher, William Hutton, John M'Cara, John Swanston, and John Brown, ministers; with James Reid, ruling elder.

Two cases of insubordination on the part of preachers, which occurred at this period, are deserving of notice, as tending to illustrate the high notions which the Synod entertained of the respect due to their decisions as an ecclesiasti-

cal court. The first case was that of Mr James Wylie, who received a call from the congregation of Donachlonny in Ireland. The presbytery of Down, within whose bounds this congregation was situated, put the call into Mr Wylie's hands, and entered him on trials for ordination. Some time after this, another call was given him by the congregation of Kennoway in Scotland ; and the Synod were required, according to the practice of that period, to decide to which of these congregations he should be sent. At the above meeting, the Synod, after some discussion, decided by a large majority, that the call from Kennoway should not be permitted to come into competition with that from Donachlonny ; and the presbytery of Down were enjoined to ordain, with all convenient speed, Mr Wylie, in the latter congregation. Mr Wylie refused to submit. The presbytery held several meetings, at which they dealt with him to no purpose. The business was referred by the presbytery to the supreme court which met at Edinburgh, in April 1754. Mr Wylie was required to state his reasons for refusing to comply with the decision of Synod. After considerable time had been spent in reasoning upon this subject, Mr Wylie was asked if his objections were removed, when he answered that they were not. A committee was then appointed to converse with him. The committee reported, that the reasons assigned by Mr Wylie were not sufficient to justify his refusal to submit to ordination. His first reason was a scruple of conscience, which he had, about being ordained amongst a people, where there prevailed such an objectionable mode of administering oaths, which, as has already been noticed, was by touching and kissing the gospels. The committee replied, that this reason was not entitled to much consideration ; for the Synod had expressed their unanimous disapprobation of this mode of swearing ; and there was ground to believe, that, as there seemed to be no express law rendering this mode of taking an oath obligatory, the Irish Seceders would ere long, in the proper use of means, obtain deliverance from this grievance. Besides, the giving of a fixed gospel ministry to the people



would be one of the best means of enlightening their minds, and thereby putting an end to this superstitious practice. His second reason was founded on the law which rendered it imperative on the Seceders in Ireland to pay tithes to the prelates. Mr Wylie considered this a supporting of prelacy, and inconsistent with their "covenant obligations," and he could not conscientiously administer sealing ordinances to those who were chargeable with such a sin. To this the committee replied, that Mr Wylie took altogether a mistaken view of the subject, that tithes are not the property of the proprietors of the land, far less of the tenants who possess them, that they were originally imposed by the legislature with the consent of the ancient proprietors, and the lands are both sold and let with this burden; and that, therefore, the payment of these tithes cannot properly be reckoned either a supporting of prelacy, or contrary to our covenants. Besides, they said, Mr Wylie's reasoning would be equally valid, as an objection, against his settlement in any congregation in Scotland, inasmuch as the Scottish Seceders were liable, as well as others, to pay stipends to intruders, which, according to Mr Wylie's reasoning, would be a supporting of these intruders, and contrary to their covenant obligations. His third reason was, that a portion of the congregation of Donachlonny were opposed to his settlement among them. To this it was replied, that if there were any of the people, who entertained prejudices against him, this was owing wholly to his endeavouring to alienate their affections from him, by refusing to accept of their call; but should he submit to ordination among them, this would have a happy effect in removing their prejudices and regaining their affections.

When the committee presented the above report, the Synod declared that Mr Wylie's reasons were fully answered, and that he was highly culpable in not fulfilling their former sentence; they further peremptorily enjoined him, *de novo*, to repair to Ireland without delay, and to submit to the presbytery of Down, with a view to his settlement in Donachlonny.

Mr Wylie being called in, and having this sentence intimated to him by the moderator, he declared, that he would on no account go to Ireland, or be settled in Donachlonny, be the consequences what they might. The Synod, of course, felt their dignity insulted by this reply; and were unanimously of opinion that Mr Wylie deserved to be censured for his contumacy, but delayed considering, till the ensuing day, what censure ought to be inflicted; and Mr Wylie was summoned, *apud acta*, to appear before them next forenoon, at ten o'clock, to answer for his conduct.

On the following day, Mr Wylie appeared at their bar with a subdued demeanour, and pled guilty to his offence. He said, that he was heartily sorry for his undutiful conduct toward them, in having expressed himself in such a manner as to give them just ground of displeasure, and was willing to submit to whatever censure they might think proper to inflict. At the same time, he represented, that he had been in a bad state of health while he was in Ireland, that he was not yet completely recovered, and he hoped that the Synod would use tenderness toward him, and would not urge him to return immediately to that kingdom. The Synod, though somewhat softened by his acknowledgment, proceeded to consider what censure should be inflicted on him; and they at last agreed, that he should be admonished from the chair to conduct himself more cautiously and dutifully for the future, agreeably to the solemn obligations under which he came, when he received licence. This was accordingly done by the moderator. With regard to his request, to be allowed to remain in Scotland for the recovery of his health, the Synod granted him an indulgence of four months; and at the end of that period, he was to proceed immediately to Ireland, provided his health admitted, that he might be ordained in the congregation of Donachlonny.

When the four months of grace expired, Mr Wylie still found it necessary for his health to remain in Scotland; and at the next meeting of Synod (November 1754), he was again obliged to appear before them to give an account of his

non-fulfilment of their appointment. The plea which he urged was the state of his health. The Synod sustained his excuse, but did not release him from his engagement to go to Ireland, until it was intimated to them by a letter from a member of the presbytery of Down, that the congregation of Donachlonny had withdrawn the call which they had given to Mr Wylie, and that the presbytery had declared them at liberty to call another. On receiving this information, the Synod declared their former decision no longer binding on Mr Wylie.

The second case of insubordination, to which a reference has been made, and which occupied the attention of the Synod at the same time with the proceedings which have now been detailed, was that of Mr David Forrest, who had received a call from the congregation of Midholm, and another from the congregation of Stow. The competition was decided by the supreme court (October 1752), in favour of Stow, and Mr Forrest was appointed to be ordained in that congregation. One year elapsed, during the course of which the people of Stow waited patiently for Mr Forrest's settlement amongst them. The Edinburgh presbytery, within whose bounds the congregation of Stow was situated, at length made a complaint to the Synod, that Mr Forrest refused to submit to ordination; and they summoned Mr Forrest to appear before the supreme court. Mr Forrest obeyed the summons, and stated in presence of the Synod his objections to a settlement at Stow. The Synod after an ineffectual attempt to remove Mr Forrest's difficulties, appointed a committee to converse with him. In the mean time a call from the congregation of Inverkeithing to Mr Forrest was laid on the Synod's table, which the Synod, after some consideration, dismissed, on the ground that they had already appointed Mr Forrest to be ordained in the congregation of Stow. The committee appointed to converse with Mr Forrest reported, that, after some time spent in reasoning with him, they had been successful in removing his objections, and that he had expressed his willingness to submit



to ordination. After receiving this report, the Synod enjoined the presbytery of Edinburgh to proceed with all convenient speed in his settlement.

These proceedings took place in November, 1753. But when the Synod met in April, the following year, the presbytery of Edinburgh again complained, that they had been unable to carry into effect the sentence of Synod, for that Mr Forrest refused to comply. The same process was again gone through as formerly. Mr Forrest was heard in support of his objections. Discussion took place in the Synod; and Mr Forrest was again handed over to a committee, that they might deal with him. When the committee gave in their report, it was unfavourable. Mr Forrest remained immovably fixed in his purpose not to be ordained at Stow. A long process of reasoning on the subject again took place in the Synod, and Mr Forrest was asked, If he was convinced by what he had heard? He replied, that he was not. Another committee was appointed to converse with him, who reported, "That notwithstanding all the reasoning and influence they could use, he remained the same as before." Mr Forrest was again called before the Synod, and interrogated, if he was willing to submit; to which he replied, that he could not do so at present; but requested that they would allow him some time to ponder upon the matter, with a view to get his scruples removed. The Synod, wishing to show him all manner of indulgence, agreed that he should not be required to give a definite answer till their next meeting. Mr John M'Cara was opposed to this decision, and craved, that he might have the following statement, expressive of his views, inserted in the record:— "That he was of opinion, that the Synod should proceed to consider, at this meeting, Mr David Forrest's conduct, in regard he judged that Mr Forrest had no reason of weight, why he did not submit to his ordination in Stow, according to the former appointment of Synod; and that his reasoning against it proceeded entirely upon a circle, and imported that the clearness of a young man to accept or not accept of a call

to a particular congregation, was a necessary ingredient in the call of God to that congregation; whereas our books of discipline hold forth the outward and ordinary calling to the ministry to have two parts only; the election of the people, and ordination, or the solemn separation of the person appointed, to God and his kirk, after he is tried and found qualified, by fasting, prayer, and imposition of the hands of the presbytery: So that according to the judgment of this national church, agreeably to the sacred oracles, a man ought, when regularly chosen and appointed to a particular flock, to take the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; and that, therefore, he the said Mr M'Cara, thought the Synod ought not to trifle with Mr Forrest or any young man in this matter, but to proceed with them according to the rule of the Lord's word, leaving events to him, whose promise will be forthcoming to them, in this and every other case, when they walk in his ways and keep his charge. Zechariah iii. 7."

At next meeting, a petition was presented from the congregation of Stow, expressing their continued attachment and adherence to Mr Forrest, notwithstanding the reluctance he had shown to accept of their call; and requesting the Synod to expedite his settlement amongst them. But Mr Forrest's resolution remained unchanged. He was asked, If he had now obtained "clearness" to submit? He replied, that he had not. The business was again referred to a committee, who were charged with the difficult task of endeavouring to remove Mr Forrest's objections. This committee reported, that they had conversed with Mr Forrest, with a view to induce him to submit; and they proposed, as the result of their conference with him, that if Mr Forrest would profess his sorrow for the trouble he had given the Synod, in refusing from time to time, to submit to their decision, under the mistaken notion, that a candidate's private inclination is essentially necessary to constitute a relation between him and a particular people, and not the determination of the judicature to which he is subject, and if he would further declare,

that his fixed principle is, that in matters not morally evil, it is the duty of one subject to a judicature to submit to their decision; then the Synod might take into consideration, whether it would be for edification to proceed with the settlement of Mr Forrest at Stow, seeing he had done so much to alienate the affections of the people from him.

The Synod, after deliberating on this proposal of the committee, refused to adopt the latter part of it; but in reference to the former part of it, they agreed to put the following question to Mr Forrest:—"Do you profess your sorrow for giving the Synod so much trouble, by refusing from time to time to comply with their decision, and to submit to ordination in Stow, from the mistaken notion, that a candidate's private inclination is essentially necessary to constitute a relation between him and a particular people, and not the determination of the judicature: And is it your fixed principle, that in matters not morally evil, it is the duty of one subject to a judicature to submit to their decision?" To this Mr Forrest replied in the affirmative; and the Synod, having obtained from him this confession, agreed that he should be admonished by the moderator from the chair, on account of his conduct, the sinfulness of which he had now acknowledged.

After the admonition was tendered to him, the Synod next considered what was to be done in consequence of Mr Forrest refusing to submit to ordination at Stow. A long time was spent in reasoning on this point. After a considerable deal of discussion, the question was again put to Mr Forrest, whether he had yet obtained "clearness" on the subject; to which he gave the same negative answer as formerly. The Synod unanimously found him censurable for his obstinacy, and were about to consider what censure ought to be inflicted on him, when the commissioner from the congregation of Stow rose and begged leave to address the court. His statement was to the following effect:—"That seeing the Synod had used all due means for bringing about the desired settlement with Mr Forrest, and that he, notwith-



standing thereof, still obstinately refused to comply, and for which the Synod had actually found him censurable, and were about to consider what censure should be inflicted on him, he (the said commissioner) declared and protested in name of his constituents, that as all hopes of a settlement with Mr Forrest, in an amicable way, were now lost, they therefore gave up all claim unto Mr Forrest by virtue of their call to him and sentence of Synod following thereupon; and that they should be free of whatever consequences might hereafter follow on his said refusal." He thereupon took instruments in the clerk's hands, and craved extracts.

In consequence of this declaration, made by the commissioner from Stow, the Synod declared the call from that congregation to Mr Forrest null and void; and that the people were at liberty to apply for another moderation, and to call whomsoever they might think proper. They further agreed to the following overture, which was designed to serve the two-fold purpose of expressing their disapprobation of Mr Forrest's conduct, and of laying down the doctrine of the Synod, to be acted upon, in all similar cases, in time to come:—"That since Mr Forrest's sinful conduct, in refusing to comply with the sentence of Synod, wherein it is impossible to prove any moral evil, still continued; and that thereby the due obedience and subjection in the Lord which, according to his vows when licensed, he owed to this judicature, is still refused, which conduct of his obliged the people of Stow to make the above declaration, from the affection which they did bear to him: Therefore, though Mr Forrest deserved to have his licence taken from him for his said conduct, the Synod should notwithstanding, out of lenity to Mr Forrest, acquiesce in rebuking him for the same, and admonishing him to beware of such a sinful step for the future: And, moreover, the Synod agree, that if any candidate shall hereafter refuse to comply with the judgment of the judicature concurring with an harmonious call, the said judicature shall proceed to censure, in case the candidate cannot support his refusal by reasons founded on the word

of God ; and that, in the case of calls for the future, judicatures shall proceed upon the merits of the cause, without laying any stress upon the inclinations of the candidate, and that nothing done to the contrary hereof, now or formerly, shall be pled as a precedent in time to come." In conformity with this resolution, Mr Forrest was rebuked by the moderator, for his contumacy, and this affair terminated.

At this period, the Secession Church was called upon to mourn the loss of another of its distinguished worthies. The health of Mr Ebenezer Erskine had, for some time past, been in a declining state. His originally vigorous constitution had been gradually yielding to the increasing infirmities of age. For a short while before his death, he had become unfit to sustain the accumulated load of official duty, connected with the public situation which he occupied as a minister of the gospel. His affectionate people, in order to relieve him from the active duties of his office, invited his nephew, Mr James Erskine, to take part with him in the work of the ministry ; and this amiable youth was ordained to be the colleague and successor of his uncle, on the 22d of January, 1752. Only a short interval elapsed after the death of his brother Ralph, when Ebenezer was called upon to put off the earthly house of his tabernacle. When he heard of his brother's death, he exclaimed, " And is Ralph gone ? He has twice got the start of me ; he was first in Christ, and now he is first in glory."\* In a letter written to a friend soon after this event, he says, " According to the course of nature, it was my turn to have gone off before him. But the will of the good and sovereign God has determined otherwise, and that I should tarry behind for a while in this weary wilderness. It seems I am not yet made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, but need to be more beaten in the wilderness with the hammer of affliction, before I come to the upper temple and sanctuary. But good is the will of the Lord."†

Though he was at this time in a very debilitated state,

\* Fraser's Life of E. Erskine, p. 454.

† Ibid. p. 457.

through the severity of his trouble, yet at the earnest request of his people, who were desirous to see and hear him once more before his departure from them, he went from his bed to the pulpit, and preached for half an hour from these words, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" he then returned from the pulpit to his bed. This discourse was one which had been composed by him with a view to the improvement of the death of his brother. "His last sermon (his biographer informs us) was literally preached from his bed to a company assembled in his room, where he baptized a child, after discoursing on a text with which he had particularly wished to finish his ministry, viz. Psalm xlviii. 14, 'This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.'"

The following account of the holy exercise of this eminent minister, in his last illness, and of the concluding scene of his life, extracted from Dr Fraser's interesting memoir, is deserving of a place in this record.

"His private conversation with relatives and other kind inquirers, during his last illness, was at once cheerful and edifying. He often expressed himself in language to this effect: 'I have always found my times of severe affliction my best times. Many blasts I have endured through life; but I had this comfort under them, a good God, a good conscience, a good cause.' When one of his elders thus accosted him, 'Sir, you have given us many good advices, may I ask what you are now doing with your own soul?' 'I am just doing with it,' he replied, 'what I did forty years ago; I am resting on that word, "I am the Lord thy God."' Another friend, surprised at the serenity and cheerfulness he possessed in the immediate view of death and eternity, put the question, 'Sir, are you not afraid of your sins?' 'Indeed no,' was his answer, 'ever since I knew Christ, I have never thought highly of my frames and duties, nor am I *slavishly* afraid of my sins.'

"To several friends who were conversing with him one afternoon, he expressed his assurance of perfect bliss in the



following memorable words :—‘ O, Sirs, my body is now become a very disagreeable habitation for my soul ; but when my soul goes out of my body, it will as naturally fly into the bosom of Jesus, as a stone will fall to the centre.’ Or, as others relate the anecdote, he said, what is entirely to the same effect, and what probably he also uttered, either then or about the same time ; ‘ I know that when my soul forsakes this tabernacle of clay, it will fly as naturally to my Saviour’s bosom, as the bird to its beloved nest.’ To a relative he one day said, ‘ While age and infirmities are increasing, I desire to wait all the days of my appointed time till my change come, looking out for the everlasting day of the immediate enjoyment of the Lord, when sighing and sinning shall have an everlasting end.’ To another of his relations who came to see him, and began to comfort him thus, ‘ I hope you get now and then a *blink* to bear up your spirit under your affliction,’ he promptly returned this spirited reply, ‘ I know more of *words* than of *blinks*. Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him. The covenant is my charter ; and if it had not been for that blessed word, my hope and strength had perished from the Lord.’ To his beloved children he unbosomed himself in the most endearing manner, mingling consolation with his dying counsels : ‘ Though I die, the Lord liveth. I have known more of God since I came to this bed, than through all my life.’

“ During the night on which he finished his earthly career, Mrs Fisher having come from Glasgow to visit her dying father, was sitting in the apartment where he lay, and engaged in reading. Awakening from a slumber, he said, ‘ What book is that, my dear, you are reading ? ’ ‘ It is your sermon, father,’ she replied, ‘ on that text “ I am the Lord thy God.” ’ ‘ O woman,’ said he then, ‘ that is the best sermon ever I preached.’ The discourse had proved very refreshing to himself, as well as to many of his hearers. A few minutes after that expression had fallen from his lips, he requested his daughter to bring the table and candle near the bed ; and having shut his eyes, and laid his hand under

his cheek, he quietly breathed out his soul into the hands of his Redeemer, on the 2d of June, 1754. Had he lived twenty-four days longer, he would have finished the seventy-fourth year of his age ; and had he been spared three months more, he would have completed the fifty-first of his ministry, having resided twenty-eight years at Portmoak, and nearly twenty-three at Stirling.”\*

When the death of Mr Erskine was announced to the Synod, at their meeting in November, 1754, they were deeply affected by it. They felt that one of their wisest counsellors and brightest ornaments was gone. They considered it as a call given them to humble themselves before God. In recording the event in their minutes, they mentioned it as an “ awful providence of God ;” and when they appointed some of their number to conduct the devotions of the Synod, at the opening sederunt, they enjoined them to take special notice in their prayers of this event, as a cause of humiliation.

The name of Ebenezer Erskine deserves to occupy a distinguished place in the religious history of Scotland. To the noble stand which he made at a period of acknowledged degeneracy in the national church, are we to attribute, under God, the existence of the Secession. Aided by those venerable and single-hearted men, who placed themselves by his side in the day of his trial, and who shared with him in the censures inflicted by the ecclesiastical judicatories, he was the honoured instrument, in the hand of God, of forming and rearing up a church, by means of which the gospel was preserved in its purity, in our land, when it was in great danger of becoming extinct, and from which the gospel sounded forth to distant regions. It was owing to the firmness and intrepidity of this individual, seconded by the efforts of his excellent associates, that an asylum was erected in our country to which religious liberty fled, and where it found a secure retreat, when it was expelled from the Establishment. What could the people have done, with the yoke of patronage wreathed so firmly around their necks, if the Secession

\* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 458-460.

had not come to their rescue, at the time it did, and presented them with the invaluable boon of hearing the gospel preached by pastors of their own choosing. It must have been peculiarly gratifying to Mr Erskine, to behold the wide extent over which the Secession had spread, and the amount of good which it had accomplished, before he closed his eyes in death. He must have regarded it as a pleasing token, that the sacrifices and struggles, which he had made in his Master's service, had not been made in vain. While Mr Erskine, by his wisdom and talents, was peculiarly fitted for promoting the success of the cause in which he was embarked, he was eminently distinguished as a preacher of the gospel. The dignity of his manner, his commanding appearance, his ready eloquence, and the truly evangelical strain of his doctrine, rendered him a great favourite in the pulpit with all classes. He enjoyed, during the course of a long ministry, a degree of popularity which has fallen to the lot of few. A minister of the gospel who had frequently heard him preach (the Rev. William Hutton of Dalkeith) speaking of his public ministrations, said ; " I never saw so much of the majesty of God in any mortal man as in Ebenezer Erskine." And the Rev. Adam Gib of Edinburgh pronounced upon him a similar eulogy. Having asked at a brother in the ministry, if he had ever heard Mr Erskine preach, and being answered in the negative, he said, " Well then, Sir, you never heard the gospel in its majesty."\*

There is no greater honour which can be conferred on an individual, in the present life, than to be employed as an instrument in stemming the progress of error, and in maintaining the cause of truth in the midst of abounding corruptions. Such an honour was conferred upon Ebenezer Erskine, in common with the other founders of the Secession. Though, while living, he received a large share of obloquy for the exertions which he made in defence of popular rights, yet posterity will do justice to his memory, and in the ages to come, his name will be associated with the names of those

\* Life of Ebenezer Erskine, p. 482.



worthies, who, at different periods, have laboured successfully for the benefit of the church, and the good of their country.

In consequence of repeated and urgent applications from America, the Synod took into consideration the propriety of sending a mission to that part of the globe. But their licentiates were, at this time, so few, and the demands for their services at home so numerous, that they were obliged to defer, from time to time, undertaking a transatlantic mission. They agreed, however, in April 1754, to send one of their own number to labour for a few months in North America. The choice fell upon Mr Thomas Clerk, minister of Ballibea in Ireland. He was appointed to sail for Pennsylvania in the month of August, and he was to continue labouring in that province, and in other places where his services might be required, till the beginning of April in the following year, when he was to be at liberty to return home. This appointment Mr Clerk was prevented from fulfilling, by reasons which the Synod sustained as valid. The American petitioners, after waiting two years longer, sent another representation (May 1756), in which they expressed the disappointment they had received, by Mr Clerk's not coming amongst them; and they earnestly craved that the Synod "would exercise bowels of compassion towards them, and send them an able and faithful minister with all possible speed, that so the Lord's scattered remnant might be gathered together, the bread of life broken amongst them, and the Redeemer's interest and kingdom promoted in the country and continent where they lived." The Synod appointed a committee to write a friendly letter to the petitioners, and to state to them, that they were prevented by the want of preachers from granting their request at present.

From the commencement of the Secession, frequent opportunities were given to the people, of observing days of humiliation or of thanksgiving, according to the varying aspects of divine providence. At every half-yearly meeting of Synod, it was usual to appoint one or two of the brethren

to mark the dispensations of providence, that might occur before next ordinary meeting, and to prepare the draught of an act, in which were embodied the reasons of humiliation or of thanksgiving, according to the nature of the events. Though there was a danger of these exercises degenerating into a mere matter of routine, yet they were calculated, by the frequency of their return, to cherish devotional habits in the people, and to accustom them to mark the hand of an over-ruling providence in the public occurrences of the day. In these periodical documents, the usual title of which was, "An Act for a Fast," the Synod recorded their sentiments concerning passing events, and they mourned over the sins which prevailed, not only in their own community, but throughout the land. In looking over a considerable number of these, I find in each a strong expression of attachment to the person of the reigning sovereign, and fervent prayers offered up for his preservation, and for the welfare of the different branches of the royal family ; also a lively interest expressed in the success of His Majesty's arms, which the Synod seems, at this period, to have connected with the maintenance of the protestant religion.

The following paragraph, from one of these acts, is inserted as a specimen :—"The Synod call on all under their inspection to cry earnestly at the throne of God, that he would return to the present generation, revive a covenanted work of reformation, turn all ranks from the evil of their ways to himself, make iniquity as ashamed to hide its head, and reclaim from those abominations which lay the foundation of his quarrel against us ; that he may bless our sovereign King George, and all the branches of the royal family ; go forth with our armies, and grant them success against our enemies ; reform our army and navy from the abounding wickednesses that take place among them, whereby he might justly be provoked to make them, like Ephraim, faintly turn back in the day of battle, and deliver them into the hands of their enemies ; that he may sanctify unto us, and the whole generation, the two late defeats which our armies

have suffered, the one in France, and the other in America ; that he would conduct and guide his Prussian Majesty, preserve him from dangers to which he is so much exposed in the field of battle, and make him, and the rest of the protestant princes at the head of the protestant armies in Germany, more and more instrumental in bringing down those powers that are the support of the beast."

The pressure of business had hitherto prevented the Synod from giving attention to the overture which was laid before them, in November 1753, concerning the alleged mistakes in the Act and Testimony, and other official documents. A meeting of the Synod was appointed to be held, specially for this purpose, at Glasgow, in the month of March, 1755. All the members were earnestly requested to attend ; and such as might be prevented from attending, were required to send their sentiments in writing, so that the Synod might thereby be the better enabled to judge in the matter. The Synod met on the 4th of March, and continued their deliberations during that and the two following days. After having read the overture, paragraph by paragraph, and made a variety of amendments upon it, the question was put, "Whether they should now pass it into an act, or appoint a committee to get it printed and circulated in its amended form, so that not only the members of Synod, but all concerned, might have it under their consideration, before it should be finally adopted?" This latter part of the alternative was adopted ; and Messrs James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Brown, and Daniel Cock, were appointed a committee to superintend the publication of the overture.

A transaction took place about this time, which, on account of the publicity of it, and on account of several ministers connected with the Establishment being involved in it, occasioned great scandal among the friends of religion in Scotland. This was the publication of a tragedy (Douglas) by Mr John Home of Athelstaneford, a minister of the national church ; and the countenance given to the representation of it on the stage, by the attendance of several of his



brethren at the theatre. It was not to be expected that such an outrage upon the religious feelings of the country should be permitted to pass unnoticed or uncensured. The theatre was, at this period, a proscribed amusement in Edinburgh. By an act of the legislature, passed in the year 1737, it was declared, "That every person who should, for hire or reward, act, or cause to be acted, any play, or other entertainment of the stage, without the special licence and authority mentioned in the said act, should be deemed a rogue and a vagabond, and for every such offence should forfeit the sum of £50." \* Soon after the passing of this act, an attempt was made to obtain a licensed theatre in Edinburgh. But a petition being presented by the professors of the University, supported by the magistrates, setting forth the dangerous tendency of a play-house, the attempt was frustrated. The players, however, endeavoured to act in opposition to the law. A process was instituted against them, before the Court of Session, at the instance of the presbytery of Edinburgh, and a verdict obtained. They were fined in the statutory penalty of £50; and not choosing to pay the fine, warrants were issued for their apprehension, when they fled from justice. Another party succeeded to those whom the presbytery had thus put to flight, and they endeavoured to elude the law, by calling their place of entertainment, not a *play-house*, but a *concert-hall*. †

Home's tragedy of Douglas was brought upon the stage, for the first time, on the 14th of December, 1756. The house was crowded to excess with the rank and literature of the Scottish metropolis. Beside the author himself, there were present the following ministers of the Church of Scotland:—Messrs Carlyle of Inveresk, White of Liberton, Home of Polwarth, Scot of Westruther, Dysart of Eccles, Cupples of Swinton, and Steel of Stair. The Edinburgh presbytery, within whose bounds the offence was given, immediately wrote letters to the presbyteries, to which these ministers severally belonged, complaining of their conduct,

\* Scot's Magazine for 1757. P. 18.

† Ibid.

and calling upon the presbyteries to adopt measures for vindicating the credit of the holy ministry, and supporting the interests of religion. Mr White, who belonged to the Edinburgh presbytery, was summoned before them, and, having expressed sorrow for his conduct, was suspended from the exercise of his ministry for a short period. The other ministers appeared before their respective presbyteries, and submitted to rebuke for the offence which they had given, with the exception of Messrs Home and Carlyle. Mr Home, after a delay of several months, gave in the demission of his charge to the presbytery of Haddington. Mr Carlyle obeyed the summons given him to appear before the presbytery of Dalkeith; but refused at first to make any explicit acknowledgment of his being at the theatre, or to express any sorrow for his conduct. In consequence of his refusal, the presbytery were under the necessity of giving him a libel.

The libel contained three articles of charge:—1. That Mr Carlyle had associated familiarly with players—persons who, by their profession, and in the eye of the law, were of bad repute. 2. That he had attended the rehearsal of the tragedy of Douglas, and given assistance and direction to the players on that occasion. 3. That he had appeared openly in the play-house in the Canongate, “within a few miles of his own parish, near to a university-seat, and hard by the city of Edinburgh, where he was well known, having often preached and assisted at the administration of the Lord’s Supper in that city.”\* Mr Carlyle objected to this form of procedure. He gave in a paper, in which he substantially admitted the charges preferred against him, and expressed sorrow that he had given offence; but contended that these charges did not form a proper ground for a libel and a public trial, and prayed that the libel might be dismissed. Notwithstanding Mr Carlyle’s objection, the presbytery sustained the relevancy of the libel, and found the various articles of it established by his own confession; but referred the consideration of the whole matter to the Synod, giving

\* Scot’s Magazine for 1751. P. 159.

it as their opinion, that Mr Carlyle deserved a higher censure than a rebuke, and that the censure ought to be inflicted, not by any inferior court, but by the Assembly.

A long debate ensued in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, which terminated in the following motion being carried :—"The Synod finds, That the grounds of proceeding in this affair, in the way of a libel, are not sufficiently clear and uncontrovertible ; and that it had been better and more expedient for the presbytery to have endeavoured to bring the same to an issue, either in the way of privy censure, or of brotherly conference, with proper admonition following thereon. And further, the Synod does, by this sentence, declare their high displeasure with Mr Carlyle for the step he has taken in going to the theatre, and strictly enjoin him to abstain therefrom in time coming." The presbytery were not satisfied with this decision, and carried the matter, by appeal, before the General Assembly. The Assembly affirmed, by a large majority, the Synod's decision. They further adopted an overture to the following effect :—"The General Assembly, considering how much the success of the gospel depends on the regular and inoffensive behaviour of the ministers of this church, do earnestly recommend to the several presbyteries to take such wise and effectual measures as may promote the spirit of our holy religion, and preserve the purity and decorum of the ministerial character ; and that they take care that none of the ministers of this church do, upon any occasion, attend the theatre." \*

The Associate Synod were scandalized at the public encouragement which had been given by ministers of the gospel to theatrical entertainments. They considered it their duty to bear testimony against it. In one of their acts, appointing a day of fasting, they refer to it in strong condemnatory terms. "Many," say they, "are practically studying to outbrave a threatening and punishing God, by proceeding to greater lengths in infidelity, profanity, pride, luxury, revelling, seminaries of lewdness, and other like abominations ;

\* Scot's Magazine for 1751. P. 217.



not only civil judges, but even some named presbyterian ministers, become attenders on, and encouragers of, stage-plays; nay, one of these ministers hath written, and caused to be acted in both kingdoms, a sinful and scandalous tragedy; while many others of the same denomination encourage men in ignorance, and many other evils, by bestowing as little pains as possible in ministerially instructing and warning those committed to their charge, many of whom, alas! love to have it so; by which means the generation is more and more disposed towards the embracing of popery, or whatever other abominations they may be tempted to."

Some years had now elapsed since the Synod resolved that there should be synodical, as well as presbyterial and sessional, privy censures. The formulas of questions that were appointed to be put to elders in sessions, and to ministers in presbyteries, have already been recorded. A third formula of questions was prepared, with a view to be put to presbyteries at the synodical privy censures. But the consideration of it, owing to the press of other matters, was delayed from one meeting to another; and it was not till April, 1757, that the Synod, after a careful revision, gave it their final sanction. The following are the questions that were appointed to be put to presbyteries at these privy censures:—

1. Doth your presbytery meet frequently, when the business before you requires the same?

2. Do you take care that elders from kirk-sessions attend your meetings of presbytery, as well as ministers?

3. Do you censure absent members, who do not send up, or at next meeting give, a relevant excuse?

4. Do you endeavour to be as punctual as possible in convening at the hour appointed, for the several sederunts of your presbytery, that the people who have business with you may not be obliged to a tedious and needless attendance?

5. Hath your presbytery a Bible, a Confession of Faith, and a copy of the Acts of Assembly before them at your several meetings?

6. Are you careful, when you are reasoning one with another in presbytery, to shun all warm and wrathful expressions, and to behave with a spirit of meekness and brotherly love, as it becometh brethren who are met in presence and name of the Lord Jesus?

7. Do you appoint your members by turns, to deliver an exercise and addition before each of your presbyterial meetings, when you have not young men upon trials; and do you pass judgment upon these discourses of your brethren?

8. Do you read the minutes of the preceding meeting of Synod, in your first meeting of presbytery after they come to hand, that you may give timeous obedience to what may be enjoined you by the Synod at said meeting thereof?

9. Hath your presbytery a register for their minutes, and are you careful in revising them, before they be engrossed therein, and that each moderator, together with the clerk, sign the minutes in the register that were passed during the time of his being moderator?

10. Is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper dispensed in every congregation of your bounds, at least once in the year?

11. Is your presbytery cautious in admitting entrants to the University: Are you strict and accurate in the trials, not only of their literature, but of their piety, prudence, and former godly conversation and walk; and do you propose the questions ordinarily put to young men before their licence?

12. Hath your presbytery observed a diet for prayer and privy censure since last meeting of Synod?

13. Have the members of your presbytery satisfied you, at the said diet for privy censure, about their diligence in lecturing and preaching every Lord's day, in examining their congregations, visiting families therein, and the sick, when called, and in endeavouring to be edifying in their conversation and discourse among the people; and that they are not guilty of administering private baptism, or celebrating clandestine or irregular marriages?

14. Have you parochial visitations within your bounds, for inquiring into the state of your congregations, and the diligence of ministers, according to the rules of the church?

These questions, with the presbyterial and sessional interrogatories formerly inserted, furnish us with an interesting view of the strictness of presbyterian discipline in former times. They show how complete was the superintendence exercised by the supreme court over the inferior judicatories, and how thoroughly knit together the various parts of the association were, from the lowest to the highest. The regular working of such an organization was fitted to give a powerful impulse to the body, and to preserve each part of it in a state of healthful action. Though some of the questions may be deemed minute, and though there might be considerable difficulty in keeping a system of such strictness in active operation, yet certainly such a thorough superintendence, such a complete identifying of one part of the body with another, was calculated to produce most beneficial effects. Should there be some who think that our fathers in the Secession erred in being too strict, and that their views of presbyterian government were impracticable, there is at least equally good ground for affirming that their children have run into an opposite extreme, and that there is a strong tendency at the present time to destroy the unity and efficiency of presbyterianism, by leaving each subordinate body to act for itself, without any regard to the authority of the supreme controlling power. I do not plead for the exercise of despotic power in any court, either civil or ecclesiastical; but it is incumbent on all those who hold that presbytery is the form of church government most in accordance with the word of God, to take care that it do not degenerate into a mere name. While the forms of it are observed, exertions ought to be made to keep alive the spirit of it, by the due maintenance of subordination in the different parts of the body, and by a thorough and efficient superintendence being exercised by the supreme power over every, even the minutest, portion of the association.



The first instance mentioned in the Synod records, of their engaging in the exercise of privy censure, was at their meeting in May 1762. Each presbytery\* was called before them *seriatim*, and the above questions were proposed. The Synod expressed themselves satisfied with the answers which the several presbyteries returned to the whole of the questions, with the exception of those which related to the keeping of presbytery registers, and to parochial visitations. The presbyteries were found to be deficient in these particulars, and the moderator, in name of the Synod, recommended it to them to be more attentive to these matters in time to come. At the September meeting, the Synod again engaged in the same exercise. The presbyteries were called in the order of the roll, and to each was the formula of questions proposed. Members were then required to express their opinion; and the result was, that the conduct of the presbytery of Down, in Ireland, was approved of; the presbyteries of Glasgow and Dunfermline were found not to have been sufficiently attentive to parochial visitations; while the Synod expressed themselves dissatisfied with the answers which the Edinburgh presbytery returned to a considerable number of the questions. The faulty presbyteries were enjoined to be more attentive for the future. After this it was resolved, that meetings for privy censure should be held by the presbyteries only once a year, and the twelfth question of the above formula was altered accordingly.

During the course of these proceedings, the Synod were a good deal engaged in discussing the subject of covenanting. Some of the brethren were afraid lest the practice of covenanting should grow into disuse, and the attention of the Synod was called to it, by an overture from the presbytery of Edinburgh, in August 1757. The purport of the overture was, that as the Lord “ was awfully threatening to avenge the quarrel of our breach of covenant;” and as “ the

\* The presbyteries belonging to the Synod, at this period, were three in Scotland, viz. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dunfermline; and one in Ireland, viz. the presbytery of Down.

bulk of the generation were denying the binding obligation of the covenants," the Synod should take into consideration what was "present duty" in this matter. The Synod deferred the consideration of the overture till their next meeting; and, in the mean time, presbyteries were required to turn their attention to the subject, so that each might be prepared to state what course it would be proper for the Synod to adopt. Twelve months elapsed before the subject was resumed. At the end of that period, none of the presbyteries, with the exception of the presbytery of Edinburgh, had any specific measure to propose. The overture from the presbytery of Edinburgh was read; and, after some discussion, a committee was appointed to take into consideration overtures from all the presbyteries on this subject, and to prepare a draught out of the whole, to be laid before the Synod at a subsequent meeting. This committee consisted of Messrs James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Brown, and John Jervey, ministers, with Robert Jack, elder. The presbyteries of Glasgow and Dunfermline were required to send up to the committee what they had to propose on the subject of covenanting.

The committee's report was presented to the Synod, on the 10th of May 1759; and, after being read, copies of it were ordered to be transmitted to the three presbyteries in Scotland, that they might be the better prepared, at next meeting of Synod, to give a decision concerning it. At several successive meetings of Synod, the reports of the presbyteries were called for; but the uniform answer was, "that they were not yet in ripeness to give an opinion upon this affair." It was not till the month of October 1761, that the presbyteries were "ripe" to give a deliverance upon this business. At that meeting the Synod, after hearing the opinion of the presbyteries, proceeded to consider the draught which their committee had prepared. The Acknowledgment of Sins prefixed to the Bond was read from the printed copy, and compared with the manuscript copy, amendments and corrections being made as they proceeded. But being prevented by the

pressure of other business, from completing their work, they appointed a special meeting of Synod to be held for this purpose at Glasgow, on the 17th of March, the ensuing spring. This meeting was thinly attended, there being only nine ministers and three elders present. After reasoning for some time on the subject of covenanting, a motion was made and agreed to, that, instead of proceeding farther at present with the consideration of the draught, they should consider their overture, printed in the year 1755, concerning historical mistakes alleged to be in the Testimony, and other official papers, and determine how far said overture was right or wrong; and that thereafter a new edition of the Testimony should be printed, with such corrections as might be made, previous to any farther step being taken on the subject of covenanting. As there were so few members present, they deferred the review of the overture till a future meeting.

In the month of August, this business was resumed at a meeting which had been specially appointed for the purpose. The Synod entered upon a review of the overture which had been printed in the year 1755. After a sederunt had been spent in this work, a proposal was made by some members, that they should sist procedure with regard to the present overture, and that they should proceed to consider the act of the Associate Presbytery, printed in the year 1744 (making covenanting a term of ministerial and christian communion), as a bar in the way of present procedure, and that they should either approve of, or rescind the same; or determine whether any form of covenanting that may hereafter be adopted by the Synod, shall be such a term of communion. This proposal was overruled, and the Synod proceeded with the consideration of the overture concerning the historical mistakes. This overture was in the shape of a bulky pamphlet; and, after the Synod had read upwards of forty pages of it, and reasoned at considerable length upon it, they found that it would be inexpedient to convert it into an act, after it had been so long postponed; but they agreed to appoint, at their next meeting, a committee to review the historical



part of the Testimony, and to correct any mistakes that might be in it ; and that thereafter, a new edition of it should be published, in such a manner as might be judged most expedient.

In the following month (September), the Synod resumed the consideration of the overture on covenanting. When they were about to enter upon the consideration of it, Messrs John Pattison, John M'Cara, and John Belfrage craved that it should be marked as their opinion, that the act of the Associate Presbytery, in 1744, making the renewing of the covenants a term of christian and ministerial communion in all time coming, and making the oath reduplicate on the Confession of Sins, was a bar in their way of concurring, in any form or plan of renewing the covenants, unless the Synod should declare it as their mind, that such things ought not to be pushed as terms of communion. After a long discussion on the subject of covenanting, the Synod appointed Messrs James Fisher, John M'Cara, John Smith, and John Brown, a committee, to correct any mistakes that might be found in the historical part of the Testimony, and to prepare a draught of the Acknowledgment of Sins, to be prefixed to the Bond. They appointed them also to prepare an overture with regard to the act of presbytery, adopted in 1744, making covenanting a term of communion. This committee reported at next meeting, that they had proceeded so far in the business ; but, after this, nothing farther was done in the matter for a considerable period, and the subject of covenanting was, for a season, allowed to go to sleep.

## CHAPTER VII.

Schism-overture. Discussions in General Assembly concerning it. Overture rejected. Overture discussed in periodicals. Collection made for presbyterian ministers in America. Collection for evangelizing North American Indians. Petitions for sermon from Philadelphia and Truro. Messrs Telfar and Kinloch sent to America. Coalescence betwixt Burgher and Anti-burgher brethren in America. Messrs Cock and Smith sent to Nova Scotia. Prosperous state of the Secession. Mr John Swanston chosen Professor of Divinity. Death of Mr Swanston. Succeeded in the professorship by Mr John Brown. Enactment concerning students of divinity. Students' library formed. Pastoral warning issued by Synod. Extract from it. Proceedings concerning Messrs John M'Cara and David Horn. Important decision of Synod. Death of Mr Fisher. His character. Decision of Synod concerning the Annat. Fund instituted for behoof of ministers' widows. Re-exhibition of the Testimony. Sentiments of the Synod concerning the national church. Vindicate their continuing in a state of secession. Proposal to repeal the penal laws against Roman Catholics in Scotland. Great alarm excited by the proposal. The subject discussed in General Assembly. Resolutions of provincial synods. Associate Synod publish a "Warning against popery." Extracts from it. Remarks on the repeal of the penal laws. Increase of Secession in Ireland. Synod of Ireland formed. Deputation sent to Irish Synod. Petitions for union with the Anti-burgher brethren. Union not accomplished. Formula improved. Regulations concerning students of divinity. Overture about mode of preaching. Death of Professor Brown. His character. His exhortation to Synod. Mr George Lawson appointed Professor of Divinity. Synod publish "Warning against Socinianism." Agree to celebrate the centenary of the Revolution. Conference with members of Reformed Presbytery. Institution of fund for supporting weak congregations, and aged ministers. American affairs. Formation of Associate Reformed Synod of North America. New missions to Nova Scotia. London Missionary Society. Associate Synod resolve to support it. Liberal collections made for it by Secession. Salary of probationers increased. Petition of probationers. Ministers appointed to itinerate. Secession in Manchester.

THE rapid increase of the Secession began to excite alarm in the bosom of the friends of the Establishment. Whatever

hopes might have been entertained, that the prosperity of the Secession would be checked by the rupture which had taken place in that body, time had shown that these hopes were ill-founded ; for, in each section of the Secession, the number of congregations was steadily on the increase. The arbitrary course pursued by the ruling party in the national church, the total disregard of the wishes of the people in the settlement of their ministers, and the neglect of the duties of the ministerial office by those whom the law of patronage had thrust into the Scottish parishes, tended to produce a wide-spread feeling of disgust in the minds of the people, who, finding so little attention paid to their spiritual improvement by those who professed to take the oversight of their souls, fled from their ministry, and swelled, from year to year, the ranks of the Secession.

On the 31st of May, 1765, an overture was introduced into the General Assembly, calling the attention of that court to the progress of dissent, and praying that they would adopt such measures as, in their wisdom, they should judge proper for arresting “this alarming evil.” This overture (usually denominated the Schism-Overture) was to the following effect:—“As the progress of the schism in this church is so very remarkable, and seems to be on the growing hand, as it is credibly affirmed that there are now one hundred and twenty meeting-houses erected, to which more than a hundred thousand persons resort, who were formerly of our communion, but have now separated themselves from the Church of Scotland ; and that the effects of this schism begin to appear, and are likely to take root, in the greatest and most populous towns ; it is humbly overtured, That the Venerable Assembly would take under their mature consideration this alarming evil, which hath so threatening an aspect to this church, to the interests of religion, and to the peace of the country ; and that they would provide such remedies against this schism, as, in their great wisdom, they shall judge proper.” \*

\* Scot's Magazine, vol. xxvii. p. 277.



After this overture was read and considered, two motions were made,—1. “That the overture should be transmitted to the several presbyteries, and they appointed to inquire after the number of meeting-houses erected by those who have seceded from this church, and the state of the congregations thereto belonging; as also to inquire concerning the rise, progress, and causes of such secessions; and to transmit what information they receive to the next Assembly.” 2. “That a committee should be appointed to consider the overture, and report their opinion thereupon to the next General Assembly.” Long reasoning ensued upon these two motions; and the question being put, “Transmit, or Appoint?” it carried, by a great majority, “Appoint.” A committee was accordingly appointed, consisting of twenty-three ministers and sixteen ruling elders.\*

The report of the committee, which was presented to the Assembly on the 30th of May, 1766, was to the following effect:—“In respect of the dangerous consequences that are to be apprehended from the increase of secession from the legal establishment of this church, and as it is reported that no fewer than one hundred and twenty meeting-houses are already erected, although it never was, nor is, intended that any sort of severity should be used against any of these persons, it is overtured, that it may be recommended to inquire into the truth of this fact: And further, as the abuse of the right of patronage has been one chief occasion of the progress of secession, it is also overtured, that the General Assembly would be pleased to consider what methods may be employed to remedy so great an evil; and it is humbly submitted, whether it may not be expedient, for this purpose, to appoint a committee to correspond with presbyteries, and gentlemen of property and influence, and to report.” This report occasioned a long debate. The Assembly agreed, without a vote, to pass from the first part of it, recommending the remit to presbyteries to inquire into the number of Secession meeting-houses. With regard to the second part, which re-

\* Scot's Magazine, vol. xxvii. p. 277.

commended the appointment of a committee to inquire into the abuse of the right of patronage, a vote was stated, "Approve, or Reject?" when it carried, by a majority of ninety-nine to eighty-five, to reject. Thus the whole of the overture fell to the ground, and the "alarming evil" was permitted to go on, without any attempt being made to check it. \*

Those who prepared the schism-overture, seem to have been endowed with the gift of prophecy, when they spoke of the effects of the schism as "likely to take root in the greatest and most populous towns." Had they lived at the present day, how deeply affected must they have been, to behold the "schism" not only firmly rooted in "the greatest and most populous towns," but widely spread throughout the peaceful rural villages; so that there is scarcely a hamlet, however obscure, where a branch of it may not be seen. If the framers of the overture trembled at the threatening aspect which the "schism" bore to the national church, upwards of seventy years ago, when there were only one hundred and twenty meeting-houses, what must have been their feelings of alarm to find that the number of meeting-houses, belonging to the different classes of dissenters, had increased to upwards of six hundred. While truth compels me to say, that the aspect which the present state of dissent in this country bears to the national church, is sufficiently threatening, it is pleasing to add, that none of the other evils which were anticipated from the progress of the "schism," have taken place. The interests of religion, so far from having sustained any injury from this cause, have rather been promoted; and the peace of the country, concerning which such fears were entertained by these alarmists, has been maintained.

During the period that elapsed from the introduction of the schism-overture into the General Assembly, till its fate was decided, the subject of it was discussed by several writers, in one of the literary periodicals of the day.† It was

\* Scot's Magazine, vol. xxviii. p. 275.

† Ibid

suspected by some, that the secret object of those who introduced the overture, was to put down the Secession by force. Mr Adam Gib, in a letter addressed by him to the editor of the periodical now referred to, adverts, in pointed terms, to this suspicion ; and he shrewdly observes, that, should this be the real object of the overture, “ it was near seventy-seven years out of time.” \* He mentions with satisfaction, in the conclusion of his letter, that, according to his information, “ the overture was far from being relished in the General Assembly, by the majority of either the reverend or honourable members of the court ; and that their putting it into the hands of a committee was no act of favour to it, but was carried in opposition to a transmitting of it to the several presbyteries, which the friends of that overture insisted for. However (he adds), even supposing the worst, the Seceders have ground of confidence, that a suppressing of the testimony among their hands, whatever might be done with their persons, would prove too hard work for all the people of the earth.”

Another writer in the same periodical, † while he disclaims all intention, on the part of the supporters of the overture, of having recourse to violence, states, in strong terms, the necessity of some measure being adopted to arrest the progress of the “ schism,” otherwise they might anticipate the subversion of the national church, by government withdrawing from it their support. The following language, written upwards of seventy years ago, may be regarded as almost prophetic of a crisis which appears to be rapidly approaching :—“ As its increase (viz. of the schism) threatens no less than the extinction of the very being of a national church, a principle of self-preservation seems to have dictated this proceeding, which, I apprehend, can give the alarm to none but such as wish the total subversion of this church. An established church, without a general adherence, or from which the body of the people are alienated, appears to be an object not unworthy the notice, the care,

\* Scot's Magazine, vol. xxvii. p. 230.

† p. 565.



or the protection of any government. Presbytery was first established in Scotland, because it was agreeable to the inclinations of the people; and if these are withdrawn or lost, it is not easy to see what title the present established clergy would have to a maintenance from the government, preferably to those of any other denomination." After the minds both of churchmen and dissenters had been agitated for twelve months, by the discussions concerning the overture, the matter was allowed to rest. The ruling party in the General Assembly did not think proper to gratify the people, by permitting any inquiry to be made into the abuse of the right of patronage; and the meeting-houses of dissenters continued to multiply as formerly.

The attention of the Associate Synod was now drawn toward America. Owing to the rapid increase of the Synod's congregations at home, and the demands that were made upon them for preachers to supply these congregations, they had not as yet been able to undertake a transatlantic mission. They had, however, given substantial proofs of the interest which they took in the diffusion of the gospel in the American provinces, by appointing, on two different occasions, collections to be made for the purpose of assisting those who were engaged in this benevolent work. The first of these collections was made for the relief of poor presbyterian ministers in the province of Pennsylvania, and in the counties of Newcastle, Kent, and Sussex-upon-Delaware, who were exposed to considerable hardships in preaching the gospel to the Indians. This fund was designed also to give support to the widows and orphans of these ministers. The sum collected for it by the Associate Synod, amounted to £138; and a friendly letter was dispatched along with it to the corporation in America, under whose management the fund was placed. A letter of thanks was received from the corporation, acknowledging, in the warmest terms, the liberality of the Synod, and stating that the money would be applied with the strictest fidelity in accomplishing the ends proposed.

Very soon after this, an application was made to the Synod from the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, requesting their co-operation in a scheme for evangelizing the North American Indians. The particulars of this scheme have been detailed in a preceding part of the narrative.\* The Synod cordially approved of the object which the Society proposed accomplishing; and they appointed a collection to be made throughout the association, to assist in carrying it into effect.

On the 15th of May, 1765, petitions were laid before the Synod from Truro in Nova Scotia, and from Philadelphia in the province of Pennsylvania, stating, in strong terms, the destitute circumstances in which the petitioners were placed with regard to the gospel, and earnestly requesting that the Synod would send some of their brethren to labour amongst them. The Synod resolved, that they would not any longer delay sending a mission to these colonies. They had not at this time any preacher whom they could conveniently send; but they resolved to send an ordained minister to labour for a few months in America, while the brethren undertook to supply his charge at home. Mr David Telfar, minister at Bridge of Teith, was the person whom the Synod appointed as their first transatlantic missionary. The following were the instructions given him by the Synod, in reference to his mission. He was to proceed first to Philadelphia, and after labouring there for some time, he was then to repair to Truro. In each of these places he was to ordain elders, if he should see it to be for edification. And as Mr Thomas Clerk had been sent over in the preceding year, by the presbytery of Down, to the province of New York, he and Mr Telfar were empowered by the Synod to constitute a presbytery for the management of discipline, and for making such arrangements as might be necessary to secure the success of the mission. Should application be made to Mr Telfar from any other places besides the two above mentioned, he was to visit them; and after making

\* See vol. i. p. 357.

himself acquainted with the circumstances of the people, he was to write home to the Synod a particular account of the state of affairs, that measures might be adopted for sending a permanent supply of sermon.

The hopes of the American petitioners were for a season disappointed. Mr Telfar did not find it convenient to leave this country so soon as had been fixed upon by the Synod. In the month of September, the same year, an application was received from some of the inhabitants of New Cambridge, in the county of Albany and province of New York, representing, in strong terms, their destitute condition with regard to the gospel, and craving that the Synod would send them, without delay, a minister to break amongst them the bread of life ; at the same time promising to give to the person who should be sent, a suitable maintenance. The Synod having taken this petition into consideration, as well as the applications formerly made from Philadelphia and Truro, resolved to send both an ordained minister and a preacher ; but delayed making the appointment till the month of November, when they were again to meet for the dispatch of other business. In the mean time, they recommended it to Messrs Thomas Main, Daniel Cock, and Joseph Ker (ministers), and to Messrs Thomas Edmond, John Bennet, and Samuel Kinloch (probationers), that they should, previous to that period, take the subject of an American mission under their consideration.

The Synod met on the 12th November, when another communication was received from the people in Philadelphia, stating the disappointment which they had experienced, in consequence of Mr Telfar not having fulfilled the appointment formerly given, and mentioning that they had erected a place of worship, and had otherwise made provision for the support of the gospel among them. They stated further, that the division which had taken place in consequence of the controversy concerning the burgess-oath, was producing very unhappy effects in their own neighbourhood, and that there had been overtures between Mr Thomas Clerk and



the presbytery of Pennsylvania, adhering to the Anti-burgher Synod, for effecting a coalescence, in so far as the American Seceders were concerned ; and they earnestly besought the Synod to adopt measures for accomplishing a union between them and their Antiburgher brethren, so that they might be one again in the Lord, both at home and abroad. They concluded by urging their request, that the Synod would encourage their infant congregation, by sending Mr Telfar, or some other able minister, to remain among them so long as should be judged proper.

In answer to this communication, the Synod renewed their appointment to Mr Telfar, to go on a mission to America early in the spring, and they agreed to send along with him Mr Samuel Kinloch, probationer. These two brethren were to remain in America till April 1767, unless the Synod should see fit either to recall them sooner, or to extend their appointments. They were to preach not only in Philadelphia, New Cambridge, and Truro, but in any other places where they might find an opening ; and the instructions formerly given to Mr Telfar, with regard to ordaining elders, and constituting a presbytery with Mr Clerk, for the administration of discipline, were renewed. Should Mr Kinloch receive a call from any congregation in America, these two brethren were empowered to take him on trials, and to ordain him ; and in the mean time, until said presbytery should meet, Mr Kinloch was to be under the direction of Mr Telfar, with regard to the places where he should preach.

Mr Telfar and his fellow-labourers sailed for America in the spring of 1766 ; and after they had been a few months in that country, Mr Telfar wrote home to the Synod, that a coalescence had taken place, on the 5th of June, between him and the Anti-burgher brethren belonging to the Pennsylvanian presbytery. Mr Clerk had coalesced with them before Mr Telfar's arrival. He stated, that Mr Kinloch had gone to Truro, and that as he himself was inclined to return home, he wished the Synod to consider the state of matters

in America, and send some one to supply his place. On receiving Mr Telfar's communication, the Synod agreed that he should be permitted to return home in the beginning of the following year, if he should then feel inclined; but that Mr Kinloch should continue to labour among the American congregations until the next ordinary meeting of Synod, when they would decide about recalling him, or extending his appointment, and when they would take into consideration the sending of farther supply.

In May 1767, the Synod received letters from the congregations in Philadelphia, New Cambridge, and Truro, expressing their warmest thanks for the benefit which they had received from the ministrations of Messrs Telfar and Kinloch, and beseeching that the Synod would either permit these brethren to continue among them, or, should they be removed, that others might be speedily sent to supply their place. A communication was at the same time received, signed by upwards of forty of the inhabitants of Londonderry, in Nova Scotia, in which they stated the great destitution of gospel ordinances which had prevailed for a long time in that place, and the joy which they experienced when lately visited by Mr Kinloch. They earnestly entreated the Synod to commiserate their condition, and to send some of their number to preach the gospel to them, that they might in due time enjoy the inestimable blessing of a fixed gospel ministry. Fettered though the Synod were by the scarcity of preachers at home, they appointed one of their probationers, Mr Thomas Waters, to set off for America by the earliest opportunity; and the presbytery of Edinburgh were enjoined to ordain him previous to his departure. But Mr Waters was prevented, by bodily indisposition, from fulfilling his appointment. During the course of this summer, the people in Philadelphia wrote, that both they and the congregation in Truro had given a call to Mr Kinloch, but that, as the call from Truro had been given before theirs, they were willing to resign their claim in favour of their brethren in that place; and they requested that Mr Telfar

might be continued among them, as he was peculiarly adapted, by his gifts, for that situation ; and, should he be willing to remain, they had a view to him as their minister. They further mentioned, that, in consequence of the coalescence which had taken place between the Synod's missionaries and the Anti-burgher brethren in Pennsylvania, great harmony now prevailed.

When the Synod met in May 1768, they nominated two of their probationers, Mr Thomas Edmond and Mr James Mitchell, to go on a mission to America ; but the issue of this appointment was equally unsuccessful with the one already mentioned. In the mean time, Mr Kinloch refused to accept of the call given him by the congregation in Truro. He returned to Scotland early in 1769, and having received, soon after his return, a call from a congregation in Paisley, he was ordained, during the course of the summer, in that town. Mr Telfar also returned home in the end of that year, or in the spring of the year following ; and the congregations in America were for a short period left destitute of preachers. The Synod, however, were engaged in making provision for their supply. At their meeting in August, 1769, in answer to a letter from the people in Truro, making an appeal to their sympathy, they agreed that Mr Daniel Cock, minister at Greenock, and Mr David Smith, minister at St Andrews, should be sent to Nova Scotia. In giving these brethren instructions respecting their mission, they recommended it to them to exert themselves to the utmost to maintain the articles of agreement which had been entered into between Messrs Telfar, Mason, and the other brethren in America ; and though they empowered them to constitute themselves into a presbytery in Nova Scotia, for the purposes of discipline and government, yet they cautioned them against making use of that power for encroaching on the authority of the Seceding presbytery of Pennsylvania, unless they should be obliged to do so, by that presbytery's refusing to maintain the articles of agreement.

Mr Cock sailed soon after this for his destination ; and a



call being given him by the congregation in Truro, the pastoral relation between him and his flock in Greenock was dissolved, and he was the first minister, in connexion with the Associate Synod, who permanently settled in Nova Scotia. Mr Smith did not accompany him, as was at first intended. A petition was received by the Synod in August, 1770, from some of the inhabitants of Nottingham in Pennsylvania, praying that a minister might be sent to labour amongst them, and expressing, at the same time, a particular desire to enjoy the services of Mr Telfar. The Synod resolved, that Mr Telfar's connexion with his congregation at Bridge of Teith should be dissolved, and that he should be sent out a second time to America. They also appointed Mr Smith's relation to his people at St Andrews to be loosed, that he might accompany Mr Telfar across the Atlantic. It was left optional to these two brethren to go either to Pennsylvania or to Nova Scotia; and a collection was enjoined to be made in all the congregations of the Synod, to defray the expense of the mission. They both set sail for Pennsylvania in the summer of 1771. Mr Telfar settled in that province, while Mr Smith went to Londonderry in Nova Scotia, and continued labouring there during the remainder of his days.

The progress which the Secession Church was making, both at home and abroad, must have been gratifying to its friends. If a sufficient supply of preachers could have been procured to answer the numerous demands that were made upon it for sermon from almost all districts of the country, as well as from America, its increase would have been still more rapid. Both branches of the Secession were at this period greatly fettered in their operations, by a scarcity of probationers. This evil operated in two ways. When congregations became vacant, after having enjoyed the benefits of a fixed gospel ministry, or when new congregations were formed, they were obliged, in many instances, to remain for a considerable period destitute of a pastor. The same cause rendered it a matter of great difficulty for the Secession to

undertake missions to distant lands. The number of their congregations increased much more rapidly at home than they could find preachers to supply them, and in proportion to the increase of their congregations, was the difficulty of finding suitable agents to send abroad.

In the course of little more than twenty years after the breach had taken place, that section of the Secession, whose history I am now recording, had nearly quadrupled the number of its ministers. Forty-one of these were labouring in Scotland and England, about eight or ten in Ireland, and three in America. The number of probationers on its list amounted to seven.\* Mr Fisher, after having superintended the Theological Seminary for a period of fifteen years, had been obliged, through the increasing infirmities of age, to resign his professorial charge, and was succeeded in it by Mr John Swanston, minister at Kinross. Mr Swanston did not long enjoy the honours of the responsible situation which he had been called upon, by the suffrages of his brethren, to fill. He was appointed to it on the 18th of May, 1764, and he was unexpectedly removed from the scene of his labours on the 12th of June, 1767. Having gone to assist at the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Perth, he was attacked, on the evening of the communion Sabbath, by a severe inflammatory complaint, which made such rapid progress, that he expired in that city on the following Friday. Mr John Brown, minister at Haddington, succeeded Mr Swanston as Professor of Divinity. At the request of the Synod, he took the charge of the students the year that Mr Swanston died; but he was not formally elected Professor till the following

\* This statement refers to the year 1770. No new presbytery had as yet been formed in Scotland since the breach. The three Scottish presbyteries were—Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dunfermline. These presbyteries comprehended all the congregations connected with the Associate Synod in Scotland and England. In Ireland, in addition to the presbytery of Down, already noticed, a new one had been formed, viz. the presbytery of Monaghan, which was erected in August 1764, and consisted, at its formation, of the following members:—Messrs Hugh M'Gill, John M'Auley, John Beattie, and John Craig.

year.\* Soon after the appointment of Mr Brown to the Professorship, the Synod made an enactment (in accordance with a former deed of the Associate Presbytery) concerning the admission of students to the Divinity Hall; declaring, that none should be admitted to the study of divinity, without proper testimonials from their respective sessions, approved of by the presbyteries; and that all candidates for admission to the Theological Seminary should be carefully examined by the presbyteries, not only on the different branches of literature, but also on the distinguishing principles of the gospel, and concerning their attachment to that particular scheme of doctrine, order of worship, and scheme of discipline and government laid down from Scripture in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, and Presbyterian Form of Church Government. The students, feeling the want of a theological library to assist them in their studies, presented a petition to the Synod, craving that they would endeavour to raise a fund for this purpose. The Synod highly approved of the object, and they issued a recommendation to all the ministers and elders under their inspection, to exert themselves in procuring, by private subscription or otherwise, the necessary supplies.

In August, 1770, the Synod issued a pastoral address to the congregations under their charge, entitled, "A Warning against the prevalence of sinful looseness in principle and practice." This address is distinguished for the plain, faithful, and affectionate style in which it is written, and for the truly christian spirit which it breathes. In it the Synod exhort the people under their inspection to make the word of God the only rule of their practice, in every branch of their social conduct. "Be not followers of men (they say) any farther than you can see their sentiments and measures authorised in the Holy Scriptures. Do not receive your principles upon trust, but search the Scriptures, to see whether they are contained in them or not. Do not suffer yourselves to be misled by the reputations of men, ministers, or

\* May 5, 1768.



parties ; but be ye followers of the saints, and united in your zealous attachment to your principles, upon a certain and powerful evidence of the truth." They further warn the people "against mistaken notions of christian liberty, as if it consisted in a person doing whatever seems right in his own eyes, without consulting the comfort and edification of his brethren. No society (they add) could possibly exist, if all mankind acted upon this loose principle, which makes void the law of God, and contradicts the very light of nature. Condescension, forbearance, and long-suffering, are branches of the christian temper indispensably required in every church member ; and they necessarily imply a self-denying regard to the opinions and conduct of others, in many instances of daily experience in the ways of religion." They also give a caution to their people "against indulging a bitter, censorious, uncharitable temper of mind against such as have not precisely the same views of the faith and order of the gospel with themselves." This caution they enforce by the following excellent remarks, which are well deserving the attention of professing christians at all times :—"Emulation, wrath, strife, and seditions, manifestly are the works of the flesh, and they are an open disgrace to the cause of christianity, which neither requires nor admits such dishonourable means of promoting it. It is good to be zealously affected always in this excellent cause, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ; but to confine their charity to a party, is so far from being a christian temper, that it manifests some of the worst dispositions in all that are guilty of it, and has, in every age, been the foundation of the greatest excesses. Uncharitable judgments, and evil surmisings, arrogate divine prerogatives, are a constant act of injustice to our neighbours, and a plain violation of the golden rule of doing to others as we would be done unto. They commonly arise from pride, ignorance, and selfishness ; and they furnish an occasion of blasphemy and reproach against the ways of religion they are employed to promote. Besides, it is evident that such dispositions blind the mind.

and pervert the judgment; and that those who are abandoned to them, with equal eagerness seek occasions of blaming others, and of justifying themselves. Prejudices of this sort exclude conviction, and have a dangerous tendency to render mankind slaves to the most unworthy and pernicious passions." \*

An address framed in such a christian spirit, and circulated extensively throughout the association, could not fail to produce, upon both ministers and people, a beneficial effect. It was fitted to produce, on the one hand, a more decided attachment to those principles which, as Seceders, they professed to hold; and it was calculated, on the other, to soften the asperities of party spirit, and to lead them to cherish a feeling of christian forbearance toward other denominations, whose sentiments might differ from their own.

Hitherto, owing to the scarcity of preachers, and the rapid increase of the congregations, the Synod had been under the necessity of rendering the term of theological study as brief as possible; so that it was usual to license their young men, after they had been engaged in the study of divinity for four years; but, by an act passed on the 4th of May, 1774, it was rendered imperative on all candidates for the ministry, to attend, in ordinary cases, the divinity hall for five sessions, and the Professor was prohibited from receiving any certificates of admission, except such as were given by the presbyteries.

As one of the objects of this narrative is to preserve a record, not only of the public transactions in which the Secession Church has been engaged, but also of her judicial proceedings, for the benefit of those who are in the pale of her communion, that they may know what those decisions are which she has given on questions of importance, that have from time to time been discussed in her judicatories,—I shall here give an account of the proceedings of the Associate Synod, in reference to two of their members, who, after de-

\* Warning, &c. Pp. 6-8.

mitting the pastoral charge of their congregations, insisted on being permitted to occupy a seat in the church courts.

Mr John M'Cara, minister at Burntshields, being accused by his people of neglecting the duties of his office, and of conduct inconsistent with the dignity of the ministerial character, the Synod found the charges preferred against him so far substantiated, that they administered to him a rebuke. Mr M'Cara did not acquiesce in the justice of the sentence; and as the harmony between him and his people was interrupted, he offered the demission of his charge, which was accepted. At next meeting of Synod, the question was proposed, Whether Mr M'Cara ought to have a seat in the court? After some discussion, a committee, consisting of Messrs James Fisher, John Smith, John Brown, and John Pattison, was appointed to prepare an overture on the subject.

The report of this committee was to the following effect: —“ That as it was necessary to maintain the parity of the number of ministers and elders in this court; that as far as they find, it has been the uniform practice of the Church of Scotland for ministers who voluntarily demitted their charges, to cease sitting as members of the ecclesiastical courts they formerly ruled in; and that as elders who remove to another congregation have no seat in the session thereof, till they be called to the exercise of their office by that congregation, they were unanimously of opinion, that Mr M'Cara should be dropped from the roll of this court, as at present he, by virtue of his late demission, has the charge of no particular congregation.” After the report was given in, it was moved, that the Synod should delay coming to a determination upon this question; but it carried, in opposition to this motion, that they should proceed to an immediate decision. The question was then put, “ Adopt the overture of the committee, or not?” when it carried, by a large majority, to Adopt; and the Synod accordingly declared, that Mr M'Cara ought not to sit and judge in any of the ecclesiastical judicatories.



The same year that this decision was pronounced (1768), Mr David Horn, minister at Cambusnethan, presented the demission of his charge, in opposition to the wishes of his congregation. The Glasgow presbytery, on whose table the demission was laid, refused to accept of it, as Mr Horn was still able to discharge the duties of his office ; and his people, so far from being anxious for his removal, petitioned that they might enjoy the benefit of his labours. Mr Horn protested, and appealed to the supreme court ; and the Synod, after hearing parties, agreed that the pastoral relation between Mr Horn and his congregation should be dissolved. In consequence of this decision, Mr Horn's name was dropped from the Synod roll, by virtue of the act already mentioned. Mr Horn was much dissatisfied with the Synod's refusing to allow him to occupy his seat amongst them, as a member of court. He craved, at next meeting, to have his opinion marked in the following terms:—" 1. He cannot see how a minister can be continued in full power and liberty to preach, and dispense gospel ordinances, and yet be denied the liberty and freedom of the other branch of his ministerial office, viz. the actual exercise of government and discipline. He is of opinion, that both keys were committed by the glorious Head to the apostles, and by consequence to their ordinary successors in office, and cannot be taken from them, but upon the account of their misconduct. 2. He cannot see, from the acts and constitutions of this church, that any minister demitting his charge on account of necessity, as was his case, is to be deprived of his seat in judicatories ; and so cannot but look on his being denied a seat in this court, to be, at least interpretatively, a censure upon him, as he is hereby denuded of a privilege to which he conceives he has a right, by virtue of his office. 3. He is at a loss to apprehend the justness of said act of Synod (May 1768), in regard he has not seen it supported by any one text of Scripture, or any just and necessary consequence derived therefrom, or from any universal or approved practice, or acts and constitutions of this church, specified in the said act ; and

he craves further to be at liberty to add, in time coming, whatever other scruples and difficulties he may have with respect to said act."

Mr Horn continued to besiege the Synod with petitions and remonstrances on this subject, until, on the 5th of May, 1773, they reviewed and confirmed their former deed, declaring it to be improper for ministers who have demitted their charges to have a seat in the church courts. So far from being satisfied with this second decision, Mr Horn made his appearance at the bar of the Synod, in the month of August following, and remonstrated at great length on the injustice that had been done to him, in removing his name from the roll. After being fully heard in his own cause, a long discussion ensued, which terminated in the following vote being stated:—"Affirm the former deeds of this court, in May 1768 and 1773, relative to ministers not sitting in Synod after demission of their charges; or, Reverse them?" It carried, by a great majority, "Affirm." Against this decision Mr Horn protested; and Mr George Coventry, minister at Stitchell, adhered to his protest.

Long and elaborately-written papers, entitled, "Reasons of Protest," were afterwards given in by both of these brethren, and were entered upon the Synod's record. "Answers" to these reasons were prepared by a committee of Synod, consisting of Messrs John Pattison, John Belfrage, Alexander Shanks, and James Scott. This document, which was also inserted in the Synod's record, is drawn up with great learning and ingenuity, and contains a masterly vindication of the Synod's decision. The following extracts, taken from the introductory part of this paper, are deserving of attention, because they not merely show what were the general principles on which the Synod proceeded, in giving the decision complained of, but also contain a correct and scriptural view of the constitution of presbyterian courts, and of the power of their members to exercise discipline in these courts. This portion of the paper consists of a series of propositions,

which constitute the ground-work of the subsequent "Answers."

"1. None have any right to a seat for rule in church judicatories but elders, whose office is to rule and govern the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. This cardinal principle of the presbyterian constitution is clearly founded in the word of God.—1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Pet. v. 1–3; Rom. xii. 7, 8.

"2. A congregational session, consisting of teaching and ruling elders, in a particular congregation, is the radical judicatory in the christian church.

"3. Superior judicatories are composed only of such members as have a regular seat and judicial powers in the congregational sessions, which are immediately subordinate to them. Upon this principle, a classical presbytery is defined to be a judicatory which represents all the congregational sessions in a certain district; and a synod is a court which represents all the classical presbyteries in a much larger extent of country. Every session that is completely organised, is therefore represented in a presbytery, synod, or assembly; and none but the constitutional members of sessional judicatories can sit in these superior courts, as representatives of the church of Christ, and invested with judicial authority. Where congregations are not provided with a fixed pastor, the exercise of discipline in them is connected with the appointments of their respective presbyteries, and their sessions are represented, but do not sit by actual delegation, in the superior judicatories.

"4. All church-officers are authorised to act as immediately the servants of Christ, who hath appointed them to their several offices in his church; 1 Cor. xii. 28, Ephes. iv. 8–12; and the extent of their sphere must be estimated from the nature of their office, and from their relation to some particular church; Acts xx. 17–28, compared with Rev. ii. 1–6. According to this principle, ministers and ruling elders, in a constituted church, have no power to exceed the limits of their established congregational relation, in any act or mat-



ter relating to the exercise of discipline, except in virtue of the authority of a higher judicatory, to which they are in a regular subordination ; 2 Cor. x. 12-16.

“ 5. Presbyterian courts are officially the elected representatives of the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. This principle is contended for by all the presbyterian writers, in opposition to the lordly usurpations of prelacy on the one hand, and independent anarchy on the other. The sentiment itself has a clear foundation in Matthew xviii. 17, Rev. 2d and 3d chapters, where the angels of the seven churches are addressed as the representatives of the churches ; Rev. i. 11.

“ 6. Ruling elders and ministers stand precisely on one footing, as to every thing that relates either to the power of elders, or the exercise of that power ; 1 Tim. v. 17. Every attempt to distinguish the nature, and grounds, and extent of their ruling powers, is an unhallowed effort to undermine the presbyterian constitution.

“ 7. Ministers and elders, demitting the exercise of their office in particular congregations, demit the exercise of their eldership and right to the exercise of discipline respectively. It will surely be allowed, that it is impossible they can both demit and retain, at the same time, the exercise of judicial powers in their respective congregations ; and it is an affront to common sense to suppose, that they can acquire a right to exercise the key of discipline in sessional or presbyterial courts, whereof they had never been members, merely by demitting their official ministrations in a particular congregation, where they had been regularly called to rule and govern the flock of Christ. The effect of a demission, when accepted by the proper court, is, that it entirely dissolves the line of connexion between the person who demits, and the congregation where he had an oversight, without establishing a relation between him and any other. A minister or elder is only entitled to sit in judgment, and exercise discipline, upon the footing of his official relation to some particular congregation ; and, through the medium of that relation,

he becomes a member of superior courts of judicature. The truth of this principle is demonstrated—*First*, From all those passages of Scripture which assert the immediate relation of elders to particular churches and congregations ; Acts xx. 17 ; Phil. i. 1 ; Titus i. 5 ; Rev. i. 11, 20. In the last of these passages, the apostle is commanded to write severally to the seven churches which are in Asia ; and he fulfilled his commission by writing to the respective angels of these churches. These angels are church-officers, united in a presbyterian connexion. What was written to them, was written to the churches they were severally related to ; and therefore these angels were both the elders and the representatives of the several churches. *Secondly*, From all the arguments employed by presbyterians to combat the arrogance of diocesan bishops, who assume a power of discipline where they have no pastoral connexion, in direct contradiction to Acts xx. 17, 28. *Thirdly*, From all the topics that establish the right of the christian people to elect, and to be governed by their own elected, pastors and elders ; Acts xiv. 23. *Fourthly*, From the nature and necessity of the service which is to be performed at the admission of a minister or elder, who had been formerly ordained to the exercise of his office in any congregation, where he had no relation before. His admission is a judicial deed (Acts xiii. 1–3), and the Lord Jesus calls him, by the steps connected with that deed, to be a governor in that part of his church. The inference is plain and undeniable, that without such admission, though a minister or elder before, he could not regularly assume the exercise of his ministry or eldership in that or any other particular congregation. *Fifthly*, From the absurd consequences that would follow upon the prelatie principle of such as deny this doctrine. If a minister of unimpeachable reputation, demitting his office with the approbation of the proper courts, still retains all the power of an elder, and a right to the full exercise of all these powers, it cannot be merely a matter of prudence—it must be with him a point of indispensable duty to employ all his powers as an elder, for promoting the

design of Christ in conferring them. But where shall he employ them? In what session? In what presbytery? Over whom has the Holy Ghost made him an overseer? Ministers in a particular charge must confine their pretensions to a limited sphere,—to one session in ordinary, and to one presbytery, &c. But a minister who hath no stated relation to a particular charge, might, upon the extravagant principle, which the Synod abhors, become not only a diocesan overseer, but an universal ruler, or at least an indefinite elder and governor of the visible church. If, to all this unconstitutional claim of ruling power, be joined a warm zeal for opportunities to exercise it, and favourable circumstances equal to that zeal, a minister who has no pastoral labour to attend to in a congregation, may soon find opportunities and pretences enough to intrude his labours where they are not wanted, and to gratify his ambition at the expense of the order and peace of the church. From the whole, it appears that a minister, demitting his ministry in a particular congregation, demits at the same time his eldership, or his official ruling powers.

“ 8. Whatever acts of sessional jurisdiction are regularly performed by a minister out of his own congregation, must therefore be either expressly or indirectly authorized by a competent superior judicatory ; Acts xv. 22, 33.”

These were the principles on which the Associate Synod vindicated the decision which they had given, when they declared, by a formal deed, that no minister who had demitted the charge of his congregation, ought to sit and judge in any church court. After stating these principles in the introductory part of their paper, they proceed to make an application of them, by giving specific answers to the reasons of protest advanced by the two brethren who complained of their decision. This question, after having undergone long and somewhat keen discussion, at several meetings of Synod, was now finally set at rest.

Soon after these transactions, the Secession Church was deprived of another of its ornaments, by the removal of Mr



James Fisher from the scene of his earthly labours. He died at Glasgow, on the 28th of September, 1775, in the 79th year of his age. Had he lived a few months longer, he would have completed the fiftieth year of his ministry. He was ordained minister of the parish of Kinclaven, at the beginning of the year 1726, and he was removed from that charge to the associate congregation of Shuttle Street, Glasgow, in the month of October 1741.\* The preceding pages of this narrative, attest the active part which he took in those transactions that gave birth to the Secession. As one of the four brethren with whom the Secession Church originated, he deserves to have honourable mention made of him in this record. His name will go down to posterity, associated with the names of those good men who nobly exerted themselves to stem the torrent of corruption; and who, when religion was reduced to a low ebb in this northern part of the island, were the honoured instruments, in the hand of Providence, of effecting a considerable revival. Like those venerable men with whom he was associated, he showed how much he had at heart his Master's cause, by being unwearied in his labours, both in public and in private, to promote its success. After the formation of the Associate Presbytery at Gairney Bridge, he officiated for several years as clerk. When Mr Ebenezer Erskine was obliged to resign the theological professorship, on account of the infirmities of age, we have seen that Mr Fisher was unanimously called upon by his brethren to occupy that responsible situation; and the arduous duties connected with it he discharged with great fidelity and success, so long as his strength would permit. The excellent catechism, to which he contributed so largely, and which bears his name, shows how clear and extensive his knowledge was of the various topics of divinity. He was held in high estimation as a preacher. His pulpit talents were such, that a person who was competent to judge, declared concerning him, that "neither as to sentiment, com-

\* Fraser's Life of the Rev. E. Erskine, p. 496.

position, nor delivery, had he ever heard his superior."\* He was regular in his attendance upon the church courts, and took an active part in their deliberations. During a long ministerial course, his name is found connected with all the public transactions in which the Secession were engaged. A few years before he died, Mr George Henderson was ordained as his colleague and successor in the ministerial office. Having outlived, for a considerable period, the other founders of the Secession, and having witnessed the rapid increase of its congregations, and the great amount of good which it had already accomplished among his countrymen, it must have been pleasing to him, in advanced age, to contemplate these manifest tokens of the divine approbation bestowed upon a cause which he had espoused at an early period of his ministry, and which he had laboured for nearly half a century to promote. He was gathered to his fathers in peace; and, as being one of the excellent of the earth, his memory is blessed.

Hitherto no kind of provision had been made by the Synod for the widows and fatherless children of such of their brethren as might be removed by death. As the livings in the Secession Church have never at any time been such as to tempt the ambition of worldly minded men; and as, at that period, the stipends given to the ministers were smaller than they are even at present, so, when a minister died, without leaving any private patrimony to his wife and family, their circumstances, in a worldly point of view, were far from being comfortable. The only provision made for a minister's family, by the laws of the church, was that, after the decease of the minister, the congregation where he had laboured, was required to pay the family a half year's stipend. This benevolent regulation had obtained in the national church; and the Secession endeavoured to act upon it, so far as circumstances would permit. In cases where a congregation refused to pay the *annat* (for so this provision was

\* Fraser's Life of the Rev. E. Erskine, p. 498.

termed), the Synod interposed their authority, for the purpose of making the congregation fulfil the obligation which they owed to their deceased minister's family. A case of this kind was referred to them, for decision, by the Edinburgh presbytery, in September 1775. The case was that of West Linton congregation, who, after the death of their minister, refused to pay a half year's stipend to his widow. Commissioners from that congregation were heard at the bar of the Synod, in support of their refusal. The Synod, after mature deliberation, found "that the congregation of Linton, in point of humanity and equity, and according to the law of the nation, the wonted custom of the Church of Scotland, and the common practice of the Secession, ought to pay to their pastor's widow the *annat*, or half year's stipend, after his decease."

As the payment of the *annat* could not always be depended on, especially where the congregations were poor, and as such a provision could afford only a short-lived supply, a proposal was made, at the meeting of Synod now mentioned, to form a benevolent fund for giving assistance to the widows and fatherless children of deceased ministers, who had been connected with this branch of the Secession. The draught of a scheme was laid before the Synod, the principle of which was approved of, and a committee was appointed to consider it more fully, and to prepare a memorial on the subject, a copy of which was to be sent to all the sessions, in order to obtain their co-operation. After this scheme had been considered at several meetings, it was finally adopted by the Synod, on the 8th of May, 1777. Thirty-nine ministers enrolled themselves as members of the fund; and, to render the fund more productive, a collection was appointed to be made annually, for three successive years, in all the congregations throughout Britain, that were under the inspection of the Synod. A short address was also prepared, and ordered to be read from every pulpit, on the day when the intimation for said collection was made.

In the end of the year 1778, the Synod republished all the



official documents that were acknowledged by this branch of the Secession, under the title of “ Re-exhibition of the Testimony ; or, A connected view of those principles upon which a Secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland was stated, by several ministers of the gospel in 1733 ; and, since that time, maintained by the Associate Synod.”\* Previous to this republication, they made a variety of corrections in the Judicial Act and Testimony, especially in the historical portion of it ; and they added an appendix to it, in which they extended the testimony-bearing to some public transactions which had taken place since the original Testimony was published. They prefixed to the whole a preface, in which they vindicated the practice of publishing creeds and confessions, and pointed out the subordinate place which these are intended to hold. The following passage is extracted, to show what were the views which they entertained upon this point :—

“ While we refuse that those creeds and confessions are, in any respect, the foundation of our faith, or the rule of what we are to believe towards God, we contend that they are founded on the divine word ; that they are an excellent form of sound words, which we are commanded to hold fast ; that they are a comprehensive exhibition of *the analogy of faith*, according to which we are to prophesy ; and that they are a connected representation of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. Viewed in this point of light, it will be

\* The Re-exhibition contains in it the following documents :—1. The First Testimony ; or, Reasons by the four brethren for their protestation entered before the commission of the General Assembly, November 1773 ; 2. Act, Declaration, and Testimony (ordinarily termed the Judicial Testimony) of the Associate Presbytery ; 3. The libel put into the hands of the seceding ministers by the General Assembly, with their answers ; 4. Act of declinature by the Associate Presbytery ; 5. Act of Assembly, 1732, condemning the declinature, with observations thereon, by the Associate Presbytery ; 6. Reasons by the four brethren, why they have not acceded to the judicatories of the Established Church ; 7. Act of the Associate Synod, October 1747, declaring the nullity of the Synod that first met in Mr Gib's house, April 10 ; 8. Act of the Associate Synod, met at Stirling, November 1753, containing a narrative of the rise, progress, and grounds of their secession.

difficult to show that they are either improper or absurd ; and, notwithstanding the mean and futile reflections which have, with an unjustifiable degree of ignorance and levity, been liberally thrown upon them by some professed ministers in the Church of Scotland, not to mention those in the Church of England, they are of the greatest utility in the christian world ; and, even in this degenerate age, there are, it is to be hoped, not a few who hold them in deserved esteem. Possessed of this temper and discernment, judicious christians will be apt, under the clearest conviction, to consider them as collections of divine truth, in their proper connexion ; as texts of orthodoxy, or subordinate criteria, absolutely necessary for distinguishing truth from error, and for detecting the erroneous in their unmanly subterfuges ; as avowed standing testimonies for truth, in opposition to error, and as authoritative representations, in an agreeableness to the word of God, of the principles and terms of christian communion, in particular churches, intended to direct their members how to hold comfortable and consistent fellowship with one another in the Lord. Our Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Form of Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline, with the Directory for Worship, are perhaps the most excellent ecclesiastical standards in the christian world. To renounce, therefore, any of those important truths exhibited in these standards, must involve this nation in proportional guilt ; and the more so, as we are engaged in our covenants, and other vows, to maintain and defend them against all opposition.” \*

In the concluding part of the Re-exhibition, the Synod repel the charge that was sometimes brought against Seceders by the adherents of the Establishment, that they were schismatics. They declare, in the language of their forefathers, that their continuing in a state of separation from the national church, was not because they objected to her

\* Preface to the Re-exhibition, pp. 11, 12.

constitution, or because they held opinions with regard to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, different from those which she maintained in her subordinate standards, but because they objected to the system of mal-administration which that church was pursuing, and which they considered to be no less opposed to the word of God, than it was inconsistent with the principles of her constitution. “ Their secession (they say) is not a schism in the church, for they never seceded from the principles and constitution professed and established at the Reformation and Revolution ; but, upon every occasion, declare their stedfast adherence to these, in opposition to the prevailing party who have receded from them.” \*

They further declare, that corrupt as the national church was, at the commencement of the Secession in 1733, her character since that period had become greatly deteriorated, and the original grounds of the Secession were considerably extended, so that the prospect of a re-union was removed to a greater distance than ever. The following is the account which they give of the state of matters in the Establishment, at the close of the year 1778:—“ Doctrines that are no less derogatory to the honour, glory, and Godhead of the Son of God, than dangerous to the souls of men, are openly preached and printed, in some places ; the exercise of discipline is, by many, either omitted, or accommodated to the temper of the times ; the oppressive and unscriptural law of patronage is executed with an inflexible rigour, in spite of repeated remonstrances from reclaiming congregations ; the seals of the covenant are prostituted by a promiscuous admission of those who are, by the revealed will of Christ, totally unqualified to receive them, and are therefore inadmissible by his ministers ; a disregard, if not a contempt of strictness in a profession or practice of religion, is become almost universal. These are melancholy truths, the knowledge of which is within the reach of the meanest indivi-

\* Re-exhibition, p. 309.



dual ; and, upon supposition that the secession was groundless, at the period in which it commenced, they afford the most undeniable grounds for it in the present age. And notwithstanding the current language of the times, it is not easy to conceive how the purity and peace of conscience are consistent with submission to those ecclesiastical decisions which, in their very nature, deprive it of an opportunity to discharge its duty by an open and faithful testimony against them. It is submitted to the impartial world, if there be another method by which the conscience, properly informed, and regulated by the divine law, can exonerate itself so fully and consistently, in bearing testimony against the above and other evils, as in a state of secession from the present judicatories of the church.”\*

The Associate Synod participated in the alarm which was so general over the country at this period, with regard to the prevalence of popery. This alarm was occasioned by the repeal of some of those penal enactments against the professors of the popish religion, which had so long disgraced the statute book of the British empire. During the reign of William the Third, laws were enacted, which subjected to perpetual imprisonment every popish priest who exercised any part of his functions within the kingdom, and which subjected to the same punishment every person of the popish religion who kept a school, or took upon himself the education, government, or boarding of youth. All Roman Catholics were declared, by the same enactments, incapable of taking an estate by purchase, or of receiving it by inheritance from their parents or others, unless they took oaths, and subscribed declarations, which were inconsistent with the religion which they professed. If a protestant proprietor became a papist, he forfeited his estate ; and if a protestant servant embraced popery, he was to be punished, and to be dismissed from his service. Some of these statutes were regarded as so severe, that scarcely an instance occurred of

\* Re-exhibition, p. 310.

their being carried into effect. Except for the purpose of producing alarm in the minds of those who were liable to be affected by them, they remained, to all other intents and purposes, a dead letter upon the statute-book.

A bill was introduced into Parliament, by Sir George Saville, in 1778, by which these intolerant statutes were repealed, in so far as the Roman Catholics of England were concerned; and a notice was at the same time given by the Lord Advocate, that he intended to bring in a similar bill for the relief of his Catholic countrymen in Scotland. These movements in favour of the Roman Catholics, produced a wide-spread feeling of alarm among the inhabitants of this northern part of the island. The minds of men, both in town and country, were filled with the most gloomy forebodings of future evil. In the repeal of these obnoxious statutes, they saw nothing but the overthrow of the protestant religion, and the establishment of the Catholic faith, with all its terrors. Both churchmen and dissenters united in the cry of no popery, to prevent the repeal. A motion on this subject was brought forward in the General Assembly, by Dr Gillies, one of the ministers of Glasgow, who moved, "That, as a bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics in England, has been lately brought into Parliament, and is already passed in the House of Commons, and as the next session of Parliament may perhaps be over before another General Assembly; that this Assembly should give particular instructions to their Commission, that, at their stated meetings, they should be very watchful over the interests of the protestant religion, in this part of the United Kingdoms; and that they be very attentive when any proposal shall be made to extend the bill to Scotland; and if any thing occur to make an extraordinary meeting of the Commission necessary, this Assembly (in regard their moderator lives at a great distance from Edinburgh), empower and ordain their principal clerk, upon a requisition made by the presbytery of Edinburgh, or by any ten ministers of this church, to call an extraordinary meeting of the Commission, by advertise-

ments in the newspapers; and the Assembly appoint all their members to acquaint their constituents with the above resolution, that so they may send proper information concerning this matter to the meetings of the Commission." This motion gave rise to a long debate; but, as it was opposed by Principal Robertson, whose influence at that period was all powerful in the Assembly, it was rejected by a large majority. The Principal denied that the protestant religion was in any danger from the bill in question. He characterized the penal laws against the papists, as sanguinary and cruel, and declared that nothing but the time in which they were passed could be pled in their justification.\*

The synods connected with the Establishment took up the business. Strong resolutions condemnatory of the bill, were adopted. The synod of Glasgow appointed a fast to be observed, and "recommended the study of the popish controversy to all the ministers within the province." The synod of Dumfries "appointed their moderator to write a respectful letter to the Lord Advocate, and inform his Lordship of their sentiments, as to the danger of a toleration to the Roman Catholics in Scotland, and to request his friendly assistance to prevent a repeal of the Scotch acts of parliament against popery. They also recommended it to the clergy within their bounds to preach often on the popish controversy."† Meetings were held in all districts of the country; petitions to parliament were prepared; associations were formed for the protection of the "Protestant Interest." In Edinburgh and Glasgow, the popular phrenzy broke out into acts of violence, such as burning the houses, and destroying the property, of obnoxious individuals.

Notice has already been taken, in a preceding part of this narrative, of the testimony which the brethren belonging to the Anti-burgher branch of the Secession emitted against the legal encouragement given to popery, at the present crisis. The brethren belonging to the Burgher Synod joined in the general movement. They were alarmed at the proposal to

\* Scots Magazine, vol. xl. p. 269.

† Ibid. p. 566.



repeal the above mentioned statutes. They trembled lest, when the lash of the law was no longer held over the heads of the Roman Catholics, popery should come rushing in like a flood; and they considered it their duty to sound an alarm in the ears of the people. A committee was appointed by them to prepare "a judicious and well-supported warning against popery;" and a recommendation was given to all ministers under their inspection, "carefully to instruct and establish their hearers in the truths of the gospel, in opposition to the abominations of popery." This "Warning" was published; and one or two extracts from it will show how gloomy were the apprehensions which disturbed the minds of the brethren of the Associate Synod at this period. "Some of the agents of the man of sin, expelled his own territories, for seditious practices, by the kings who have given him their power, have hid themselves in our protestant islands; and, being possessed of all that subtilty and craftiness which enable the deceiver to impose upon the ignorant and the weak, industriously watch every opportunity of creeping into houses, and leading captive silly women, laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Your weakness on this side is not imaginary, your danger is real and great." "At this alarming juncture of time, when it is generally allowed that popery is advancing with large strides into the nation, and numerous converts are brought into the communion of the Church of Rome, we durst not be silent; but, animated with zeal for sound doctrine, and simplicity of worship, discipline, and manners, we judged ourselves peculiarly called upon, as ministers of the gospel, to make the most vigorous opposition in our power, to the encroaching evil, by attempting a seasonable and close application of Scripture truths, for manifesting to the judgment the true state and condition of the Roman catholic church, which glories in her shame, in teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men." "It is no secret, that there is a great number of emissaries of the Church of Rome, disguised

in Scotland; and, should they be allowed, supported, and countenanced in the public exercise of their religion, by a legal toleration among us, who can tell what harvest a clergy so numerous, so subtle, and so well furnished with arguments to work on vulgar, uneducated, and unprincipled minds, may be able to make in a country now, through the prevalence of infidelity, ignorance, luxury, and venality, so much despoiled of all religion, and feeling the want of it? And, when their numbers and power are increased, can we doubt but they will recover the spirit of their religion, and act accordingly?" \*

Sixty years have elapsed since these passages were penned and published by a committee of the Associate Synod. The intolerant statutes against popery, the repeal of which was so much dreaded by these good men, have long been repealed; Roman Catholics have, for many years, been permitted to teach and preach in our towns and villages, without any let or hinderance; and yet the protestant faith remains as firm and sound as ever, in this northern part of the island. The experience of more than half a century has shown, that the fears, which were indulged on this subject, were imaginary. If conversions have occasionally been made to the Roman Catholic faith, from amongst the protestant population, these have been comparatively few in number, and they have been owing, in a great measure, to the peculiar circumstances in which the individuals have been placed. Alarmists of the present day, indeed, point to the thousands and tens of thousands of papists, that are to be found in Glasgow, and in some other of our large towns; and they repeat the statement, which has been repeated for at least a hundred years back, that our country is in imminent danger of being inundated with popery. But these thousands and tens of thousands are not converts from protestantism to catholicism. By far the greater part of them have been brought up in the popish faith; they have come from distant popish districts into the large towns, in quest of employment; and

\* Warning against Popery, pp. 44, 60, 64.

there is no more cause for alarm now, than there was when the synod published their "Warning." If the Roman Catholics are wandering in the mazes of error, let them be instructed in the knowledge of the truth; but let them not be oppressed nor persecuted in any way. Protestantism does not require the aid of penal enactments, to secure it against the encroachments of popery. It is perfectly able to maintain its own ground. It has made great advances since the period of the Reformation; and the fewer intolerant laws that are made, to assist it in its movements, the more rapid will be its progress, and the more complete its triumphs. The signs of the times indicate, that more enlightened views have begun to prevail upon this subject. The good leaven has found its way into the mass, and it will, in due time, leaven the whole lump.

In Ireland the Secession continued steadily to advance. Accessions were made from time to time, to the number of its congregations. Two presbyteries, in connexion with the Associate Synod, had already been formed in that island; and owing to the increased number of the congregations, it was deemed expedient, after a short interval, to erect a third presbytery, under the designation of "The Presbytery of Derry."\* Scarcely two years elapsed after the formation of this presbytery, when a petition was presented to the supreme court in Scotland, by the brethren in Ireland, craving that they might be erected into a Synod, for the purposes of government and discipline. This petition was favourably entertained by the Scottish brethren; and as it was of importance that a brotherly connexion should subsist betwixt the Synod in Scotland, and the one about to be erected in Ireland, the following were proposed as the terms on which this fraternal intercourse should be conducted:—1. A deputation of two members to be sent every year, alternately,

\* This presbytery was formed on the first Tuesday of November 1777, and consisted, at its formation, of the following members:—viz. Mr Joseph Kerr, Balligony; Mr James Harper, Knocklonghran; Mr John Bridge, Clananees; and Mr Thomas Dickson, Tarmont.



from the one Synod to the other. 2. The students of divinity, connected with both Synods, to be trained up under the same Theological Professor appointed by the Synod in Scotland. 3. Those portions of the minutes of each Synod, referring to matters of importance, to be transmitted from one Synod to the other for brotherly review. 4. Should one Synod intend to pass an act of general and lasting concern, it shall be remitted, in the form of an overture, to the other, for their friendly remarks, before it be finally adopted. 5. Both Synods to meet in a General Synod, once every seven years, or oftener if necessary, and every third time in Ireland: at this general Synod nothing shall be transacted, but what is of general importance to both Synods; and though it shall have power to review, and, on good grounds, reverse a deed of the subordinate Synods, yet in no private cause shall the operation of the sentence of the particular Synods be suspended by an appeal to the General Synod. These terms were cordially acquiesced in by the brethren in Ireland; and the Irish Synod was appointed to hold its first meeting at Monaghan, on the 20th of October, 1779, and the first general meeting of both Synods was appointed to take place at Glasgow on the first Tuesday of May 1786. This latter meeting was held at the time appointed; but no mention is made in the Synod record of any of the Irish brethren having attended; and notwithstanding the resolution, that was adopted on this subject, I am not aware that any general meeting of the two Synods ever took place.

In the spring of 1782, Mr John Thomson, minister at Kirkintilloch, was sent by the Synod in Scotland to attend the meeting of the Irish Synod, as a corresponding member; and the report which he brought back, concerning the reception that he met with, and the improved state of affairs among the Seceders in Ireland, was of a gratifying kind. The following extract from a letter, of which he was the bearer, from the Irish brethren to the Synod in Scotland, will show in what respects their condition was improved:—  
“ Brethren, it is our unspeakable mercy that we have the

free exercise of our religion, without the fears of imprisonment, fines, and unjust impositions upon our consciences, to which even some of our body were exposed a few years ago, in this isle. As the test act is repealed, the marriage of dissenters is valid in law, and the Scriptural mode of swearing allowed to Seceders, except in criminal cases, and to qualify for offices under government; which mercies will aggravate our guilt if we be unfaithful."

This same year, a movement was made in some of the congregations, belonging to the Burgher Section of the Secession, toward a union with their brethren of the Anti-burgher Synod. Several petitions to this effect were transmitted, through the presbyteries of Edinburgh and Kelso,\* to the Associate Synod, at their meeting in September 1782. The Synod agreed to consider these petitions in a committee of the whole house; but no farther step was taken in this matter. The time for a union was not yet come.

An overture from the presbytery of Glasgow called the attention of the Synod to some of the questions in the Formula, and proposed that certain alterations should be made, with a view to render the Formula more plain and uniform. The questions particularly referred to, were the second, third, fourth, and fifth; and the alterations proposed were not such as materially to affect the meaning, but consisted chiefly of abbreviations, by leaving out some of the phrases which had hitherto been in use. This overture was transmitted to the presbyteries and sessions for their consideration, and the Synod finally gave it their sanction. As some of the presbyteries had not strictly adhered to the questions in the original Formula, but had altered them to a certain extent, and thereby produced a diversity of practice, the Synod ordered a copy of the Formula (as now approved of by them), to be inserted in the minutes of every presbytery and session, to prevent all diversity for the future.

\* This presbytery held its first meeting, by appointment of the Synod, at Jedburgh, on the 18th of June, 1782. Mr George Coventry of Stitchell presided, as moderator, on the occasion.

These changes that were adopted, in reference to the questions now mentioned, had not the slightest connexion with any diversity of opinion about the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. The views of the Synod upon this point may be ascertained from the course of procedure which they pursued, with regard to one of their probationers, very soon after the above amendments were adopted. In May 1784, Mr David Hepburn sent a letter to the Synod, stating that he had scruples concerning the doctrine taught in the Confession of Faith, about the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and declining to receive farther appointments, as a preacher, from the Synod. The Synod agreed to withhold appointments from him, and enjoined the presbytery of Dunfermline (within whose bounds he was) to deal with him, "in order to reclaim him from his mistakes." What success the presbytery had in their attempts to remove Mr Hepburn's scruples, I am unable to state; but as his name soon appeared again in the list of the Synod's probationers, and as in the course of a short period he submitted to be ordained in the congregation of Newburgh, it may be presumed that he was so far reclaimed from his "mistakes" as to give satisfaction to the presbytery.

That section of the Secession Church, whose history I am now reviewing, had no philosophical class connected with their Theological Seminary, as their brethren of the Anti-burgher Synod had. They were, however, equally attentive to the literary improvement of the young men, who were training up under their inspection for the office of the holy ministry; and they were equally anxious that they should be distinguished for their soundness in the faith, and for every ministerial qualification. A variety of regulations were adopted by them, from time to time, designed to promote the respectability and efficiency of those whom they licensed to preach the gospel. In May 1786, the Synod gave an injunction to all the presbyteries to make particular inquiry, whether the young men, who applied for admission to the Divinity Hall, had gone through a regular course of study



at any of the universities. None were to be admitted to the study of divinity, who had not attended the literary and philosophical classes, at one of the Scottish colleges, for a period of at least three years. Presbyteries were farther enjoined to inquire concerning the prudence, as well as the literature and piety, of the candidates for the ministry; and the young men were required to visit the ministers residing in their neighbourhood, to give them an opportunity of judging of their qualifications.

Soon after this, the Synod gave their sanction to an overture, which was introduced by the Glasgow presbytery, and was designed to guard the Secession preachers against that affectation of philosophical refinement, which at this period prevailed extensively among the ministers of the Establishment, and rendered their discourses sapless and unprofitable. Those with whom the overture originated conceived that there was danger of the Secession students acquiring a fondness for a style of preaching, which was so much in vogue, and which, if adopted by them, would prove an effectual barrier in the way of their being useful among the people. The overture, which the Synod sanctioned with the view of preventing such an evil, was to the following effect:—

“As it is a concern of great importance to the church of Christ, that the doctrines of the gospel be preserved in their purity, and transmitted in this form to succeeding generations, it is necessary that every proper mean be employed for securing this object, and for preventing the introduction of every thing that might affect it. This is a duty incumbent on all, and especially on those who have a ministerial commission, to teach and publish those doctrines to others, and to commit them to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also: And as not a little depends upon the mode of thinking on divine subjects, and the manner of expressing them, which are at first adopted by candidates for the ministry, it is of essential moment, that every error in this stage of their preparations be timeously corrected, and that an evangelical train of thinking, and a scriptural simplicity

of language should be warmly recommended. Therefore, the presbytery, taking into their serious consideration how much the interests of religion are involved in these objects, and from apprehension of a growing fondness for false refinement and abstract reasoning in handling the truths of the gospel, among some of our entrants into the ministry, humbly solicit the interference of the reverend Synod, and their united attention to an object of so great magnitude. When the presbytery suggest these things, they do not mean to condemn the honest ingenuity of the preacher and student of divinity in seeking to find out acceptable words upon every subject; but they cannot help being of opinion that their time and attention should be chiefly devoted to solid sentiment and sound evangelical connexions in illustrating divine truths, because they apprehend that the spiritual improvement of the hearers is intimately connected with these.

“ In order, therefore, the more effectually to accomplish this end, they would humbly overture to the reverend Synod, that they give particular instructions to the several presbyteries, not only to examine with care the young men who apply to them for admission to the Professor of Divinity, as to their knowledge of the languages and other branches of literature, but that they make inquiry into such other circumstances about them as are necessary to be known, in order to their being admitted with the prospect of future usefulness in the church; likewise that the committee appointed to converse with probationers should have it recommended to them to guard the preachers against this evil which is dreaded, and propose such antidotes as they think may be most successful; that the probationers be ordered to deliver discourses before the presbytery in whose bounds they are, that the presbytery may have an opportunity of judging of their manner and proficiency, and may correct and encourage them as they shall see cause; that our Professor of Divinity be made acquainted with the design of this overture, in order to add the greater weight to his theological instructions, and to encourage his watchfulness over the students

in this important particular; and that it be recommended to every minister, who may have students of divinity under his pastoral charge, to concur in seconding these means, by directing them in their study of divinity, and recommending such books as are calculated to store their minds with useful knowledge."

During the summer of 1787, Mr Brown of Haddington died. His health had for some time been in an enfeebled state; and at his own request a member of Synod had been appointed, at the meeting in May of that year, to take charge of the students during the approaching session, as he found that his strength would not permit him to superintend their studies. The choice of the Synod fell upon Mr George Lawson, minister at Selkirk. His appointment, at first, was only for one season; but when the Synod met in autumn, soon after Mr Brown's death, Mr Lawson was formally elected Professor of Divinity, and the Theological Seminary was removed from Haddington to Selkirk.

The character which Mr Brown left behind him for piety, diligence, and theological knowledge, and fidelity in his Master's service, was highly honourable. The literary advantages, which he enjoyed in early life, were scanty; but there have been few individuals who, with such limited means of improvement, have risen to higher eminence in the church, both as a theologian and an author. The fame, which he has acquired by his useful practical writings, and especially by his Self-interpreting Bible, has been most extensive, and bids fair to be lasting. He is an encouraging example of what may be effected, by dint of industry and perseverance, in the acquisition of knowledge. The Synod, on receiving intelligence of his death, paid a just tribute to his memory, by making honourable mention of him in their record, as a person "whose eminent piety, fervent zeal, extensive charity, and unwearied diligence in promoting the interests of religion will be long remembered by this court, especially by those members of it who had the happiness of studying divinity under his inspection." They also agreed



to insert in their minutes the following postscript, which was appended to a letter written by Mr Brown a short while before his death, and which was addressed to the members of Synod :—" As many of you have been my students, and most of you my younger in years, permit me to beseech you all to do all in your power to transmit Christ's truths as faithfully and diligently to posterity as possible. His truths and cause shall shine on earth, and especially in heaven for ever, be they now as low as they will in Britain."

At the time of Mr Lawson's appointment to the professorship, a proposition was submitted by the Synod to the consideration of the presbyteries, whether it might not be expedient to fix the seat of the Theological Seminary permanently in Edinburgh, to release the Professor in all time coming from having the charge of a congregation, and to allow him for his maintenance such a salary, from the funds of the Association, as might enable him to devote the whole of his time to the training of the students, and to his own literary improvement. This scheme was found to be impracticable ; and it was ultimately determined, that the Professor should continue to have a pastoral charge, as formerly, and that the very moderate sum of £30 should be allowed him annually, to defray the incidental expenses incurred by his professorship.

The heretical sentiments, published by Dr M'Gill in his *Practical Essay upon the death of Jesus Christ*, have already been noticed in a former part of this volume.\* As the heresies of this individual were permitted to circulate for some time, without any notice being taken of them by the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Establishment, and as no adequate censure (even after notice was taken of them), was inflicted on the heretic himself, the Associate Synod considered it their duty to call the attention of their congregations, and of the public in general, to sentiments that were so dishonouring to the Redeemer, and so dangerous to the souls of men. They appointed a committee to prepare an overture on this

\* See p. 18.

subject, with a special reference to the errors contained in Dr M'Gill's Essay. The result of the committee's labours was presented to the Synod on the 8th of May, 1788, in the form of a pamphlet, entitled, *A Warning against Socinianism*. The Synod, after hearing the contents of it read over, and highly approving of the doctrine which it contained, authorised the publication of it by the committee, in the hope, "that, through the blessing of God, it would be useful for establishing christians in the present truth, and for preserving them from being led away by the error of the wicked." In this pamphlet the committee reviewed the leading articles of the system of doctrine contained in the *Practical Essay*, and pointed out their opposition to the system of revealed truth, and their dangerous tendency. The publication of the *Warning*, and the circulation of it in the different districts of the country, could not fail to have a favourable influence in checking the progress of error, and in establishing the minds of men in the truth.

As the centenary of the Revolution, accomplished in November 1688, was at hand, the Synod, after ascertaining the sentiments of the different presbyteries on the subject, agreed that the congregations under their charge should be required devoutly and gratefully to commemorate that memorable event. The 5th of November, 1788, was fixed upon for this purpose; and a committee was appointed to prepare an address embodying in it the reasons for this commemoration. This address furnishes another proof, in addition to the many that have already been adduced, of the deep interest which the great mass of Seceders have ever taken in the liberties of their country, and of the loyal attachment which they have ever cherished toward that illustrious family, the members of which have now for a succession of generations swayed the sceptre of the British empire. The address is here inserted, as worthy of a place in this record:—

“ The Associate Synod, deeply impressed with the unmerited goodness of God to us as a nation, church, and individuals, judge it a duty to appoint a day of solemn thanks-

giving for his abundant mercies. Recollecting, in particular, that on the 5th of November next a century will have elapsed since the memorable Revolution, in 1688, they are desirous to testify their gratitude to God for the very signal blessings, both of a civil and sacred kind, which that interesting period brought along with it. With grateful sensibility the Synod call to remembrance, that then the nation was rescued from tyrannical exertions of power, proper bounds were set to the prerogatives of the crown, the liberties of the subject were established on a sure and permanent basis, the land was delivered from the dread, and secured against the re-establishment, of popery, a way paved for the illustrious house of Hanover to succeed in future times to the government of these realms, and a foundation laid for our empire to rise, under an indulgent providence, to its present pitch of happiness and glory. With emotions of gratitude no less strong and lively the Synod remark the many national favours which have succeeded that glorious era; of which the continuance of the gospel, though in some places resisted and obscured; the delivering us from the repeated attempts of a Pretender to the British throne to disturb our peace and comfort, and overturn the valuable system which was then established; the preserving safe to us our religious liberties, notwithstanding of reiterated machinations against them; and the raising of able, zealous, and successful defenders of the distinguishing doctrines of christianity, so often as they have been insidiously attacked, are not the least inconsiderable and important.

“ For these reasons, the Synod appoint and summon all under their inspection to observe the 5th of November next, as a day of solemn praise and thanksgiving to the Most High, and enjoin it upon them to offer to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ blessing, and glory, and honour, and thanksgiving for these and his manifold other mercies; and to present their supplications to the Governor among the nations, that he would bless and long preserve our Sovereign King George, our Queen, the Prince of Wales, and all the



members of the royal family ; that he would continue to us the possession of our liberties, both sacred and civil, and that he would pour out upon us his Holy Spirit from on high, to determine and enable us to make a due improvement of these privileges, to contend for them when encroached upon, and to hand them down inviolate to our posterity."

During the meeting of the Synod in September 1788, a communication was received by them, that some members of the Reformed Presbytery were desirous to hold a conference with any deputation the Synod might appoint, with a view to unite in church fellowship. The following persons were appointed a committee to meet with the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery, viz. Messrs John Belfrage, William Fletcher, Alexander Shanks, Michael Gilfillan, James Husband, James Peddie, James Hall, James Henry, Robert Burns, and Thomas Edmond. The result of the conference was unsatisfactory. After a statement had been made by the committee, of a conversation which they had held with the brethren of the Reformed Presbytery on various subjects, it was found, that there was such a difference of opinion between the members of the Synod and the members of the Presbytery, that they "could not walk together in church fellowship to the edification and comfort of one another;" and it was agreed that a declaration to this effect should be made, in name of the Synod, to the Reformed brethren.

In the following year, an overture was presented to the Synod, in which it was proposed that it should be rendered imperative on every session, who had no deacons, to adopt measures for supplying this defect. The overture was allowed to lie on the table ; but no decision was given on the subject. Soon after this, another overture was introduced, proposing that elders and deacons should be ordained by the laying on of hands. This overture was remitted to the consideration of sessions ; and, as only two sessions expressed themselves in favour of the proposed change, it was rejected. A third overture was introduced at the same time with the preceding one, proposing an enlargement of the psalmody.

The consideration of this was delayed till a subsequent meeting.

But no measure has been adopted by the Synod, which has been more extensively useful in its operation, or which has contributed more to the general prosperity of the Association, than one to which, after mature deliberation, they gave their sanction in 1791. This was the institution of a fund for assisting weak congregations, for giving support to aged and infirm ministers, for defraying the expenses connected with the support of the Theological Seminary, and for other pious and charitable purposes. It was proposed that the fund should be supported by annual congregational collections, and by voluntary contributions from individual members of the church. The management of it was placed under the superintendence of a committee, annually appointed by the Synod at their meeting in May, and consisting of an equal number of ministers and elders; it being specially provided, that at least one minister and one elder from each presbytery should be members of committee; and presbyteries were allowed to nominate each a minister and elder to the Synod, with a view to their being appointed members of the committee of management. It was declared to be a fundamental principle of the fund, that no congregation should receive any assistance from it, that were judged able to give to their minister a stipend of fifty pounds annually, with a house valued at five pounds of rent; and all congregations were declared to be in this predicament, whose examination roll consisted of more than three hundred persons upwards of eighteen years of age. The highest sum permitted to be given, by way of donation, to any one congregation, at a single grant, was ten pounds. Sums of twenty pounds or upwards might be given by way of loan, either with or without interest, as the circumstances of the case required.\* During the long period that this fund has been

\* Of late years a more liberal spirit has presided over the distribution of this fund. The original restrictions imposed with regard to the amount of the donation permitted to be given, and with regard also to the circum-

in existence, many thousands of pounds have been expended from it ; and though the donations granted have usually been small, yet by means of the aid thus afforded, infant congregations have been cherished until they attained to a state of maturity ; and long established congregations, when reduced in their circumstances, have, by the same assistance, been enabled to maintain a gospel ministry in situations where, humanly speaking, the gospel would not otherwise have been enjoyed. The donations allowed for the support of aged ministers were more liberal than those which were granted to congregations. Many pious and devoted servants of Christ have thus been enabled to spend the evening of their days in comparative comfort, when, on account of the infirmities of age, they have been obliged to retire from the scene of active labour ; and when their congregations, having to maintain another minister, could not afford to give the aged pastor his accustomed stipend. There are few congregations, especially in the rural districts, that have not, at one period or another received benefit from this benevolent fund ; and both upon the ground of gratitude, as well as from a regard to the general interests of the association, they are called upon to give it a liberal support. It cannot but be a matter of regret that there should be so many blanks in the list of annual collections to this excellent fund. Both the amount and the usefulness of it might easily be doubled or trebled, without any particular effort on the part of the congregations.\*

stances of the minister and congregation warranting a grant, have been either altogether removed or considerably modified.

\* The congregations, in connexion with the Synod, having now considerably increased in number, and being scattered over a wide extent of country, it was found necessary to erect in rapid succession three new presbyteries. These were the presbytery of Perth, which was constituted for the first time on the 4th September, 1788 ; the presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk, which was erected on the 16th May, 1793 ; and the presbytery of Kilmarnock, which held its first meeting on the 2d September, 1795. The ministers who presided at the formation of these presbyteries respectively, in the order in which they have now been mentioned, were Mr John Fraser, Auchtermuchty ; Mr John Belfrage, Falkirk ; and Mr James Moir, Tarbolton.



A considerable time elapsed, after the departure of Messrs Telfar and Smith for America, before any other missionary from the Associate Synod crossed the Atlantic. Soon after Mr Telfar's arrival in that country, a petition was presented to the Synod from some people in New Cambridge, province of New York, requesting that Mr Telfar, who was then in Philadelphia, might be permitted to settle among them as their pastor. The Synod were not sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances of the congregation of New Cambridge, to determine whether Mr Telfar should become their pastor or not ; but they appointed him to go and labour for a considerable period in that place, and afterward to send home a particular account of the state of that congregation to the presbytery of Glasgow, who were authorised by the Synod to proceed in the business as they might see cause. It would appear that Mr Telfar did not settle in New Cambridge, for only two years elapsed when a call was given by this congregation to Mr Kinloch of Paisley, who declined accepting of it. In the meantime they were obliged to remain without a fixed ministry.

Soon after this a petition was presented from some people in the county of Cornwallis, in Nova Scotia, earnestly requesting that a preacher might be sent to labour among them. All that the Synod could do at present for them, was to send an affectionate letter expressing sympathy for them in their destitute situation. A renewed application was made by the same people, three years afterward, when the Synod appointed Mr James Thorburn, one of their probationers, to be ordained by the presbytery of Glasgow, and to repair with all convenient speed to Nova Scotia. But notwithstanding this appointment, Mr Thorburn remained (for what reason I am unable to state), in this country ; and the people of Cornwallis were obliged to exercise their patience for several years longer. In the spring of 1785, a call was forwarded by them to Mr Hugh Graham, probationer ; and this person having received another call from the congregation of South Shields, in the north of England, the competition was decided

by the Synod in favour of the people of Cornwallis. Mr Graham acquiesced in the decision of the Synod, and having set out for his destination, he continued to labour in Nova Scotia for a number of years.

Messrs Telfar and Clark, the two brethren, in connexion with the Associate Synod, who were labouring in the States of America, united with the ministers of other presbyterian denominations in forming a transatlantic Synod, which was declared to be independent of any of the ecclesiastical judicatories in Scotland. The Synod was first constituted on the 30th of October, 1782, under the designation of the "Associate Reformed Synod of North America;" and the ministers who united in the formation of it were the two brethren now mentioned, the whole of the brethren belonging to the Reformed Presbytery in America,\* and all the ministers of the Antiburgher Presbytery in Pennsylvania, with the exception of two. They adopted as the basis of their union the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms; excluding, however, from their profession such parts of the Confession as describe the powers of civil government in relation to religion. These they reserved "for a candid discussion on some future occasion, as God should be pleased to direct." In the article of their union, relating to the national covenants, they gave no opinion about the duty of covenanting, or about the "binding nature" of the covenants on posterity; but they agreed to declare their "heartly approbation of the earnest contending for the truth, and magnanimous sufferings in its defence, by which their pious ancestors were enabled to distinguish themselves in the last two centuries;" and they assured each other, "that they have an affectionate remembrance of the National Covenant of Scotland, and of the Solemn League of Scotland, England, and Ireland, as well intended engage-

\* These brethren had been sent out, as missionaries, by the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland, and had formed themselves into a presbytery in America, in connexion with their Scottish brethren.

ments to support civil and religious liberty." One of their articles of union had for its object the restoration of the doctrine of free communion, " which (say they) some of our denomination, through inattention, have long opposed." On this subject they expressed themselves in the following language:—" The United Presbyteries acknowledge it to be their duty, to treat pious people of other denominations with great attention and tenderness. They are willing, *' as God offereth opportunity, to extend communion to all, who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus,'* Confession, chap. 26, Section 2. But as occasional communion, in a peculiarly divided state of the church, may produce great disorders, if it is not conducted with much wisdom and moderation, they esteem themselves and the people under their inspection inviolably bound, in all ordinary cases, to submit to every restriction of their liberty, which general edification renders necessary."

The rule, which this Synod adopted for regulating the admission into their society of persons connected with other presbyterian denominations, displayed an excellent spirit, and ought to regulate the conduct of all religious denominations in receiving into their communion persons who apply to them from other societies. As the Reformed Synod was avowedly established on the general principles of the presbyterian system, as detached from the local peculiarities by which the most considerable parties of presbyterians had been hitherto distinguished, so they agreed " to reject all such applications for admission to fixed communion to the Synod, that may at any time be made by persons belonging to other denominations of presbyterians, as evidently arise from caprice, personal prejudice, or any other schismatical principles. And the only admissible application shall be such as, upon deliberate examination, shall be found to arise from conviction of duty, and to discover christian meekness towards the party, whose communion is relinquished; or such as are made by considerable bodies of people, who are not only destitute of a fixed gospel ministry, but cannot be seasonably



provided for by the denomination of presbyterians to which they belong." \*

Soon after the formation of this Synod, a letter was received from it by the Associate Synod in Scotland, in which the united brethren expressed their continued regard for the covenanted reformation of Britain and Ireland, particularly of Scotland; and requested preachers to be sent, to assist them in publishing the gospel of Christ. In reply to this communication, the Associate Synod expressed their joy to hear of their brethren in America adhering to the same principles with themselves, and wished them success in the work of the Lord; but stated, that they could not at present send them any preachers.

Soon after the arrival of Mr Graham in Nova Scotia, an application was made to the Synod for another labourer to be sent to that part of the vineyard. This application was received from some presbyterians in Amherst, who promised to give to any minister that might be sent, sixty-five pounds of annual stipend, besides allowing him a sum of thirty pounds to defray the expense of his outward voyage. The Synod appointed the presbytery of Glasgow to endeavour to find a minister, who might be willing to undertake this mission. At a subsequent meeting, the presbytery reported that they had not been able to find a brother who would undertake the mission. An injunction was then given to all the presbyteries, to converse with the probationers within their bounds, to see if any of them were willing to accept of the invitation given by the people of Amherst, and they were to report the result of their inquiry to

\* The above statements concerning the formation of the Associate Reformed Synod of North America are given upon the authority of a pamphlet (published in 1783) entitled, "*Peace and harmony restored: Being an account of the agreement which took place amongst the Burgher and Antiburgher Seceders, and the Reformed Presbytery in North America, in summer 1782.*" From the same source I am enabled to mention the names of the following ministers, as connected with the American Synod at its formation:—Messrs David Telfar, Matthew Henderson, John Cuthbertson, John Mason, Thomas Clark, James Proudfoot, William Logan, Robert Annan, John Roger, John Smith, — Dobbins, John Murray, David Annan, and — Linn.

a committee appointed to take the charge of this business. It appears that the presbyteries were unsuccessful, for no preacher was sent.

Several years elapsed, during which the Synod received no communication from the brethren in Nova Scotia. In May 1793, Mr John Brown was appointed by the Synod to write a letter to the brethren in that quarter, requiring them to give an account of the state of religion in their congregations. Two years afterwards, a letter was received from Mr Graham, containing a request, that the Synod would strengthen their hands by sending additional labourers ; and the necessity of complying with this request was become the more urgent, that Mr David Smith of Londonderry, in Nova Scotia, was now removed from the scene of his labours by death.

On receiving this intelligence, the Synod resolved to make every effort to send additional missionaries to Nova Scotia. Messrs George Williamson, John Kyle, Archibald Harper, and John Cooper, probationers, were required to take the matter into their serious consideration, with a view to their being sent ; and they were to intimate their resolution, as soon as possible, to the Synod's committee, who were authorised to defray the expenses of the mission from the common fund. It was proposed, at the same time, that Mr William Kidston of Stow, should proceed to the same destination, while supply of sermon would be provided for his congregation during his absence ; and after labouring for a season in Nova Scotia, he was to be at liberty to return to his charge at Stow, unless he should find a wider field of usefulness in the colony. None of the probationers now mentioned consented to cross the Atlantic, with the exception of Mr Harper. But after he had given his consent, he received a call from the congregation of Borrowstonness in Scotland, which produced a change in his resolution, for when the subject was brought before the Synod, he intimated his desire to remain in this country ; and the Synod, yielding to his wishes, sanctioned his ordination in Borrowstonness, where he continued labouring during the remainder of his days. With regard

to Mr Kidston, no farther steps were taken, as the committee, who were appointed to correspond with him on the subject of his mission, reported that nothing could be done in the matter, unless he would consent to demit his charge. Thus the exertions of the Synod to reinforce the mission in Nova Scotia proved at this time abortive.

In the following year, a representation and petition were received from the presbytery of Truro,\* renewing their request for additional missionaries. The Synod appointed a friendly answer to be returned; and they adopted a resolution, authorising the Professor of Divinity to recommend for licence those students whom he might think qualified to go as preachers to Nova Scotia, provided they had been engaged in the study of divinity for two or more years. Soon after this, Messrs John Waddel and Mathew Dripps were sent to strengthen the hands of the brethren who were labouring in that region of the globe. In a communication received from Nova Scotia, some time after the arrival of these preachers, it was stated, that Mr Waddel had been ordained as colleague to Mr Cock, in the united congregations of Truro and Onslow, and that Mr Dripps had been disabled from preaching by severe bodily distress. The Synod sent a letter, in reply to this communication, encouraging the brethren to persevere in their labours, and expressing their determination to give them every assistance in their power. They also mentioned, that if it were judged necessary, for the recovery of Mr Dripps' health, that he should return to Scotland, they would welcome his return, and assist in defraying the expenses of his journey homeward.†

While they were thus exerting themselves to send the gospel to foreign lands, in connexion with the Secession Church, they showed their willingness to co-operate with christians of other denominations in the same benevolent work; for the London Missionary Society having been new-

\* The brethren in Nova Scotia had formed themselves into a presbytery under this designation.

† Mr Dripps was afterwards ordained at Shelburn, in Nova Scotia.



ly formed, and being about to commence its operations among the heathen, the Synod cordially acquiesced in an overture which was introduced for the purpose of recommending that Society to their favourable notice. In this overture, it was proposed, that the Synod should appoint a committee to correspond with the Society in London, assuring them of the Synod's hearty approbation of their design, and wishing them all success in the accomplishment of it ; and though they could not, " as a body," promise them any pecuniary aid, seeing " they were not an opulent society, and were engaged in other missions," yet " they did not doubt but that many individuals among them would cheerfully contribute their mite." The committee appointed to correspond with the London Society, on this occasion, consisted of Messrs James Hall, James Peddie, John Dick, and Thomas Aitchison.

I may here be permitted to add, that it was by a minister of the Secession Church (the late excellent Dr Waugh, of Wells Street, London) the fundamental principle of the London Missionary Society was originally framed ; and the high place which that Society has long occupied in public estimation, has been in a great measure owing to the catholic spirit by which that principle is characterised.\* The pledge which the Associate Synod gave to the Society, when it was first formed, has been faithfully redeemed. The pulpits of the Secession have, generally speaking, been cheerfully thrown open to the successive deputations that have periodically visited Scotland, to plead the cause of that Society ; and, by the members of the Secession congregations, comparatively poor though they be, many thousands of pounds have been cast into its treasury. When Dr Waugh visited Scotland in 1815, on behalf of the Society, he carried with him to London the very liberal sum of £1420, which was collected almost exclusively in the churches of the Secession. The same individual visited Scotland a second time, in 1819, on the same errand, when, though his labours did not ex-

\* Memoir of Dr Waugh. Third Edition. P. 153.

tend over such a wide field as during his former visit, he received, chiefly from the congregations of his brethren in the Secession, the sum of £737, 16s. Mr Broadfoot, another of the Seceding ministers in London, visited Scotland, on behalf of the same Society, in 1823, and, during a short tour, he collected, chiefly among the congregations of the Secession, the sum of £700.\* These instances are a few of the many that might have been here recorded, for the purpose of showing the liberal support which the London Missionary Society has received from the ministers and people belonging to the Secession Church. A similar spirit of liberality has been manifested by them to the Baptist and other missionary institutions. Such conduct is the more creditable, that the congregations from whom these collections have been received, consist, for the most part, of the poorer classes of society, and have considerable pecuniary exertions to make in supporting the institutions of religion among themselves.

In order to promote the comfort and respectability of that most useful class of men, the probationers,† whose weekly labours are so serviceable to the church, a small increase was made, in 1795, to their very moderate salary. Hitherto, half a guinea constituted the remuneration which they received (exclusive of board) for the services of each Sabbath. Henceforward congregations were enjoined to pay them, for their weekly labours, the sum of fifteen shillings; and a recommendation was at the same time given to the more affluent congregations to increase this sum; but a discretionary power was also given to presbyteries to lower the sum, in

\* Memoir of Dr Waugh. Third Edition. Pp. 201, 208, 219.

† For the sake of those who are not well acquainted with the forms and institutions of the Secession Church, it may be necessary to state, that the *probationers* are the young men who have been licensed by the presbyteries to preach the gospel, but who have not yet been ordained in a fixed charge. A scheme of appointments is made out, at every meeting of Synod, according to which the probationers go the round of all the vacant congregations, preaching in one or other of them every Sabbath, to give the congregations an opportunity of hearing them, that, should they be pleased with their doctrine and manner of life, they may give them a call to become their pastor.

the case of the poorer congregations, to twelve shillings. At a subsequent period, this weekly allowance was raised to its present amount, one guinea.

In 1798, the probationers presented a petition to the supreme court, requesting that arrangements might be made with regard to their appointments, so as to grant them an opportunity of partaking of the Lord's Supper, at least four times every year. The Synod highly approved of their petition, and readily agreed to grant the prayer of it. A recommendation was given to presbyteries to appoint such preachers as might be within their bounds, to assist at sacramental occasions, that thus they might enjoy their christian privilege of observing the ordinance of the Supper; and one of the brethren, who ordinarily assisted at these occasions, was to be appointed to supply the preacher's place, by preaching for him in a vacant congregation.

Another regulation concerning the probationers, adopted in the following year, was, that they should hold diets of examination in those vacant congregations, where they might be appointed to preach, and that they should attend to the visitation of the sick. It was at the same time enjoined by the Synod, that the presbyteries should require the students of divinity, who were under their inspection, to deliver each a discourse before them, at least once every year.

A representation being made to the Synod, at their meeting in April 1799, concerning the importance of sending some of the brethren to itinerate in those districts of the country, where a pure ministration of the gospel was not enjoyed, the proposal was favourably received; and, in accordance with it, Messrs John Brown and John King were sent to labour, for two months during the summer, in some of the northern counties; while Messrs David Wilson and John Leitch were appointed to labour, for the same period, in the south-western districts of Scotland. An application was this year made to the Synod, by some people in the town of Manchester, for a regular supply of sermon. In answer to this petition, Secession preachers were imme-



diately sent to labour in that town. About two years after this, a call was given by the Manchester Secession congregation to Mr Robert Jack, minister at Greenock, who, at his own request, was removed by the Synod to Lancashire. Being an able and a popular preacher, the congregation of Manchester flourished greatly under his ministry ; and, from the period of his settlement among them, till the present time, it has maintained a highly respectable footing among the English dissenting congregations.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Old and New Light controversy. Description of the controversy. Representation and petition of Mr John Fraser. Discussions on Mr Fraser's petition. Committee appointed to review the questions of the Formula. Proceedings of committee. Overture of forbearance recommended. The Synod delay giving judgment on the overture. *Interim* Formula adopted. Several ministers dissent from the adopting of it. Synod sermon by Mr John Dick. Sermon published. Gives offence. Extracts from it. Remarks. Professor Lawson's pamphlet. Outcry against it. Extracts from it. Complaints preferred against Messrs Dick and Lawson. Great ferment in sessions and congregations. Synod table covered with petitions. Motion by Mr James Hall. Motion by Mr Michael Gilfillan. Latter motion carried. Dissents entered by a number of ministers. Preamble adopted. State of the question explained. Petitions against the Preamble. Debates upon the subject. Motion to adjourn the discussion of the question. Motion to dismiss the Preamble. Former motion carried. Several ministers and elders protest against decision. Address published by Synod. Extracts from Address. Original Burgher Presbytery formed. Kilpatrick process before Court of Session. Synod accused of disloyalty. Spirited conduct of the ministers of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Vindication of Synod by the Lord Advocate. Declaration by the Synod. Pamphlet by Dr Porteous of Glasgow. Extracts. Mr Peddie's reply. Extracts from Mr Peddie's pamphlet. Explanatory statement concerning power of the magistrate. Letter written to separating brethren. Form themselves into a Synod. Perth process. Importance of it. Decided in favour of the New Light party. Interlocutor of Lords of Session. Original Burgher Synod republish the Secession Testimony. Publish an Appendix to the Testimony. Their opinion of the National Church. Proposed union betwixt Original Burghers and Establishment. Proceedings concerning it. Inconsistent with Secession Testimony. Remarks on the subject.

MORE than half a century had now elapsed since the disruption of the Secession Church, by means of the burgess-

oath controversy. During the course of that period, nothing had occurred to mar, to any great extent, the harmony which prevailed in the Associate Synod. Though a variety of questions had been introduced, relating to the formation of new congregations, the settlement of ministers, and the general government of the church, and though there had sometimes been keen and protracted discussions, yet there had been no serious dissension among the brethren, and no controversy had arisen of such consequence as to produce any great ferment throughout the association. This section of the Secession had enjoyed much internal peace; it had also been favoured with a high degree of external prosperity. But toward the close of the eighteenth century, the harmony of this portion of the church was disturbed by one of those convulsions, which take place occasionally in all human societies, and which, however much they are to be deplored, on account of their bringing into angry collision the discordant elements of our nature, yet are ultimately productive of good, inasmuch as, like storms in the natural world, they tend to purify that particular region where their influence is felt. This convulsion was occasioned by those discussions, which were carried on for several years, in the Associate Synod, concerning certain questions in the Formula, relating to the two much-agitated points of the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and the obligation of the national covenant upon posterity.

The controversy which originated in these discussions, and to which I am now about to direct the attention of the reader, has ordinarily been termed, "The Old and New Light Controversy." I find it difficult to give a just description of the character of it. It differed materially from the controversy which was carried on concerning the above-mentioned points in the General Associate Synod, of which a full account has been given in a preceding part of this work. The General Synod remodelled the whole of their Testimony; and they asserted the complete independence of Christ's spiritual kingdom, refusing to give to the magistrate



any power to interfere in matters of religion ; they also affirmed, that the Solemn League and Covenant enjoined, under civil penalties, matters that were purely religious ; and, in so far as it did so, they pronounced it to be unwarrantable. The Associate Synod did none of these things. They neither remodelled their Testimony, nor abjured the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, nor expressed disapprobation of any part of the national covenants. But they adopted an explanatory statement, which they prefixed to the formula of questions proposed to preachers and ministers at receiving licence and ordination ; and in which they declared, that they did not require any preacher or minister to approve of compulsory measures in religion ; also, that, while they admitted the obligation of the covenants on posterity, they did not interfere with those disputes which had been carried on concerning the nature and kind of it. On account of their adopting this statement, a breach was made in the Synod, by some of the members renouncing its authority, and forming themselves into a separate religious society ; and the controversy which was carried on concerning the topics in dispute, was characterised by a considerable degree of bitterness. My readers will be able to judge, from the following details, how far the purity of the faith, and the interests of truth, were involved in this unseemly strife.

On the 13th of May, 1795, the following document was submitted to the consideration of the Associate Synod, by Mr John Fraser, minister at Auchtermuchty :—

“ The representation and petition of the subscriber humbly sheweth,

“ That a concern for the interests of pure and undefiled religion, and for the prosperity of the ecclesiastical society with which he stands connected, prompts him to trouble this reverend court with a declaration of his mind concerning some of our religious sentiments, and to solicit a necessary reform.

“ It is a great mercy that the gospel is hitherto preserved among us in its purity. The doctrine of free grace, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the eternal life

of men, in connexion with all other fundamental truths revealed in the oracles of God, is, I hope, a doctrine cordially believed, and explicitly preached, by all the ministers belonging to this Synod; and, to their great honour, no socinian, arminian, or neonomian errors, repugnant to it, have ever been tolerated by them. But we profess adherence not only to fundamental truth, but also to many other doctrines of inferior importance. Among these are the power of the civil magistrate in regard to religion, and the perpetual obligation of our public national covenants upon posterity. The former is expressly asserted in the 23d chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith; and the second question of our Formula, I apprehend, allows us not to differ from that Confession in the smallest jot or tittle of doctrine contained in it; for the words of it are, ‘Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith; and do you acknowledge the said Confession as the confession of your faith?’ &c. The obligation of our covenants is also the subject of the 4th question of said Formula; the words of which are, ‘Do you own and acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant, and of the Solemn League and Covenant?’ &c. At our licence and ordination, we solemnly professed to hold these principles, and this profession is renewed as oft as we concur in licensing and ordaining others; for we demand their assent to the questions of the Formula, as a test of their orthodoxy, and of their holding the same principles with ourselves.

“But it is a fact well known to us all, that, many years ago, a pamphlet was published against the Antiburghers, bearing the name of a late respectable member of this court, and containing the following doctrines:—‘That all legal establishments of religion are improper and unwarrantable; and that our covenants are obligatory upon posterity, materially considered, but have no obligation upon us, entirely of the same nature with their obligation upon our fathers who swore them.’ Since the publication of that pamphlet, it has been read by many of us; and there is rea-

son to think its principles have been adopted, not only by private christians in our communion, but also by some members of Synod ; which I mention, not to the discredit of any of them ; for it is possible they imbibed such opinions without adverting to their inconsistency with our Confession of Faith and Formula ; and I know that some young brethren, sensible of this inconsistency, have acted so honestly as to refuse an unlimited assent to the questions of the Formula, declaring themselves to be of these sentiments. The Synod also, with all the presbyteries and members composing it, have always borne with such brethren, and we live in the closest fellowship with them, without making any distinction between them and other brethren, which tolerant spirit I do not absolutely condemn. But, since we are disposed to exercise such forbearance, and since we all seem now sensible that the principles of the above mentioned pamphlet accord not with our Confession of Faith and Formula, I think it highly necessary that the Formula be altered, and rendered more consistent with the sentiments of all our ministers, elders, probationers, and students. What pity it is, that the smallest contrariety should exist between the sentiments of any of us, and our solemn profession, when our principles and profession are, in the main, so consonant to the unerring standard of truth ? Doubtless the profession of a church ought perfectly to harmonize with her real principles ; and nothing, either essential or circumstantial, should be professed, which is not fully believed.

“ May it therefore please this reverend Synod, to apply a proper remedy against the present corruption ; and, by that means, relieve me, and other brethren, from the perplexity and uneasiness it gives us. That he who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, may be graciously present with this reverend court, to direct them in this momentous affair, and that truth and peace may ever prevail among the members of this Synod, is the prayer of their affectionate brother, and humble servant,

JOHN FRASER.”



It was agreed that this representation should lie upon the table, till next meeting of Synod, that, during the interval, members might have it under their consideration. Messrs William Fletcher of Bridge-of-Teith, and Thomas Porteous of Orwell, craved to have it marked, that they disapproved of the Synod receiving such a paper, and that they were of opinion it ought to have been read only extra-judicially.

When the Synod met in the month of September, Mr Fraser's representation occasioned a long discussion, at the close of which it was moved, "That a committee be appointed to review the questions in the Formula, betwixt this and next meeting of Synod, and bring in an overture for uniting the members of this court in their sentiments respecting the power given in our Confession of Faith to the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, and respecting the obligation of our National Covenants upon posterity; and that said committee inform themselves of what scruples are entertained on these subjects; and, in the mean time, that the presbyteries be allowed to exercise forbearance at licence and ordination, with respect to the articles above mentioned; it being always understood that said forbearance shall not preclude this Synod from adhering to the Formula, as it now stands, if they shall judge proper." It was moved as an amendment to this motion, that the last part of it, from the words "*and in the mean time,*" be omitted; but the original motion was carried by a great majority. Messrs William Kidston, sen., and William Willis, dissented from this decision. Mr Willis afterward withdrew his dissent, and craved to have it marked, that, in his opinion, the law should have effect while it existed. The following persons were appointed a committee, for the purposes mentioned in the resolution now stated. Messrs John Dick (moderator), David Walker, John Belfrage, David Greig, William Taylor, Andrew Lothian, Robert Jaffray, James Dewar, William Kidston, sen., George Lawson, James Hall, James Peddie, Thomas Porteous, James Husband, John Fraser, David Hep-

burn, Michael Gilfillan, and William Fletcher, ministers, with fourteen elders.

This committee met at Edinburgh, on the 20th of October. There was a full attendance of ministers. All the questions of the Formula were read over, one by one. A variety of alterations (some of which were merely verbal), were proposed, and agreed to. The chief discussion took place on the second and fourth questions of the Formula. The second question required an approbation of the *whole* doctrine of the Confession of Faith. An objection was made to this, on the ground that said Confession gave greater power to the civil magistrate in matters of religion, than to many seemed agreeable to the word of God. A similar objection was made to the fourth question, which required an approbation of the covenants. After a long debate, it was moved, *That said doctrine of our Confession, respecting the magistrate's power, and of our covenants, be made a matter of forbearance.* Another motion was made, *That they should proceed to explain without voting forbearance.* The vote being taken, the first of these motions was carried. The committee then prepared the following overture of forbearance, which they agreed to recommend to the Synod, to be passed into an act:—

“ The Associate Synod hereby declare their attachment to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, which were adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in the year 1647 and 1648; at the same time, hereby declaring, that although they wish to fear God, and honour the king, and consider subjection to the powers that are as an important duty incumbent on all men, yet, as the power respecting religion ascribed to the civil magistrate in said Confession and Larger Catechism, as also in the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant, has been, and still is, a matter of doubtful disputation among good and faithful men, the Synod no longer make it a term of ministerial and christian communion, but will exercise forbearance with brethren, whatever their sentiments be on that article;

and they hereby declare, that the assent of probationers, at their licence, and of ministers and elders, at their ordination, to the second question of the Formula, is not in future to be considered as an acknowledgment of said power." They further agreed to recommend, that the second question of the Formula should contain in it a special reference to this act, which it was proposed to adopt, so that persons answering the question, should express their approbation of the doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechisms, "as these were received and approved of, by the act of Associate Synod, 17—."

The report of the committee was laid before the Synod, at their meeting in April 1796. They delayed giving judgment concerning the above overture, till their meeting in spring the following year; and, in the mean time, they ordered the overture to be printed, along with Mr Fraser's representation and petition, and all the minutes of Synod respecting these documents. They further gave a recommendation to members, to converse in a brotherly manner on the questions of the Formula, which had occasioned a difference of sentiment, and to endeavour to remove groundless jealousies from the minds of one another. For the sake of those who might have scruples in giving an assent to the second and fourth questions of the Formula, as they stood in their present form, it was deemed proper that an *interim* Formula should be adopted on the points involved in these questions, till the meeting of Synod in spring 1797. It was accordingly resolved, that the following questions should be substituted, during the interval, in the room of those that were ordinarily put to persons receiving licence or ordination.

Question Second,—“Do you sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, compiled by the Assembly of Divines that met at Westminster, with Commissioners from the Church of Scotland, as said Confession and Catechisms were received and approved by the acts of the General Assembly 1647 and 1648, to be founded in the word



of God? And do you believe that the power of the civil magistrate, in matters of religion, mentioned in said Confession, should always be understood in a sense consistent with the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, which is not of this world? And, in this view, Do you receive the said Confession and Catechisms, as the confession of your faith? and, Do you promise, through divine grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the doctrine contained in said Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and to assert, maintain, and defend it to the utmost of your power, against all errors and opinions contrary to it?"

Question Fourth,—“ Do you own the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League, in so far as the matter of them is founded upon, and agreeable to, the Holy Scriptures, without approving of the enforcement of these covenants by civil pains and penalties? And do you believe that these covenants were a solemn engagement of adherence to the truths and ordinances of Christ, contained in his word, and that additional guilt will be contracted by the present and future generations, if they shall renounce these Reformation principles? And, Do you believe that public covenanting is a duty, under the New Testament, to be performed when God in his providence calls to it?"

Messrs Porteous and Willis craved to have it marked, that they disapproved of any alteration being made in the questions of the Formula. Mr George Lawson dissented from the deed of Synod, adopting the question respecting the Confession of Faith. Mr Andrew Lothian dissented from the Synod's adopting the question respecting the covenants; and Messrs David Greig, James Dewar, John Leitch, and Walter Greig, dissented from adopting either of the questions, on the ground that they appeared to them to be indefinite, and not calculated to answer any valuable purpose. It was not intended that these questions should remain permanently in their new form, but merely that they should serve as an *interim* Formula, until the Synod should give

judgment on the overture concerning forbearance, submitted to their consideration by the committee.

At the opening of this meeting of Synod, Mr John Dick, minister at Slateford,\* who had been moderator at the preceding meeting, preached a sermon, which the brethren, who afterwards withdrew from the Synod, condemned in no measured terms. The subject of Mr Dick's discourse was, 2 Tim. i. 13, " Hold fast the form of sound words." The sermon was speedily published under the title of *Confessions of Faith shown to be necessary, and the duty of Churches with respect to them, explained*. In the concluding part of the discourse, the preacher urged powerfully upon his brethren the duty of exercising forbearance toward one another with regard to the points at issue between them.

In a note appended to the discourse, when it was published, Mr Dick stated more fully what were his sentiments on the controverted points; and as this sermon occasioned great lamentation, and was the subject of much testimony-bearing, on the part of those who at this time renounced as unholy the communion of the Associate Synod, it will be proper to give my readers an opportunity of judging for themselves how far Mr Dick's sentiments warranted such strong condemnatory language as was employed concerning them. Mr Dick was a strenuous advocate for the exercise of forbearance; and, in the appendix to his discourse, he endeavoured to show, that the articles in dispute were the very articles concerning which forbearance might be lawfully exercised. The following are the remarks with which he endeavoured to enforce his views:—

"As I have shown in the sermon, that a church may permit some things to be matters of forbearance, the only question to be considered is, Whether the articles specified be of such a nature, that forbearance may be exercised about them. Let us begin with the covenants. Against the exercise of forbearance with respect to them, it may be objected, that it is criminal not to acknowledge a moral obligation, and that

\* Afterwards translated to Glasgow.

the interests of the church will be endangered, if this security of her doctrine, worship, and government, be parted with. But, if the covenants be binding on posterity, their obligation is not so clear as the obligation of truth, of justice, and of charity. It is not so clear as that of many of the duties called moral, which, when plainly stated, commend themselves to every man's conscience. \* \* \* The impropriety, therefore, seems to consist, not in leaving out, but in retaining, a subject of doubtful disputation, as a part of our creed. Nothing but what is plain, or may easily be made plain to the meanest capacity, should be admitted among our terms of communion. On dubious points, *let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and have faith to himself before God.*

“ But if the formal obligation of the covenants be not acknowledged, the church will lose the security given by them to her doctrine, worship, and government. To this objection I answer, That if a man believes all the truths contained in the Confession of Faith, and acknowledges himself to be bound, by the paramount authority of God, to maintain and defend them, he gives all the security which the church can reasonably demand from him. Would it not be absurd to exclude from a society, a man who declares himself to be obliged, by the highest possible authority—the authority of Heaven—to adhere to certain articles of confederation, merely because he cannot farther say, that he is sensible of an unspeakably inferior obligation, resulting from a remote transaction of his father's? Can none be faithful friends to the doctrines of the gospel, and to the laws and ordinances of Christ, unless they enter into a covenant, or be parties to one already made? Alas! what a sweeping sentence! It pronounces the condemnation of all christians, except a few dissenters; of all the church of God, from the days of the apostles till about two hundred years ago; for though I have read ecclesiastical historians, modern and ancient, I never heard of covenanting before that period. Where, then, is the danger of leaving this article out of our



creed? We shall not cease, I trust, to be good christians, good presbyterians, good Seceders, zealous for the truth, and active in its service.

“ Let us now consider the other article—the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. It ought not to surprise any, that some have formed such a notion of the spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, as to think that it is entirely distinct from the kingdoms of the world; and that he alone has a right to interfere in the management of its affairs. If this be an error, it is a pardonable one. The Head of the Church will not severely censure the man who is so tender of his prerogatives, as not to approve of any thing which even seems to encroach upon them. Is it a crime to believe that conscience is so sacred a thing, that no means should be employed which have the least tendency to compel it? Our Confession says, that ‘ God alone is the Lord of the conscience.’ It is not every mind which can perceive the consistency of this assertion with the power ascribed by the same Confession to the magistrate. Besides, some think that the vesting of that power in him, constitutes him the sole judge of doctrine; for how shall he take order that blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, but by first judging what opinions are heretical and blasphemous? Nothing can be more foolish than to say, that he is not to judge for himself, but to follow the advice and direction of the church; for, first, according to this scheme, he must divest himself of his own reason and conscience, and substitute the reason and conscience of others as the rule of his procedure; and, secondly, it only transfers the right of judging concerning doctrine from one to many, from the civil magistrate to the church. But what right has the church to judge for me, any more than the magistrate? She may indeed declare the truth, and tell me what, according to her views, I ought to believe; but if I would act like a christian and a protestant, I must judge for myself, by employing my own faculties in the study of the Scriptures. Can men who have such scruples on this subject, continue to assent to the doctrine

of the Confession? No, they cannot. What advantage would the church derive from their assent? Would her interests be secured by hollow professions, and a pretended faith?" \*

These were the statements which Mr Dick penned and published; and it is exceedingly difficult to perceive wherein their heresy lies. To an ordinary mind, they seem to be distinguished for their candour, their sound sense, and their accordance with Scripture. They were, however, made the subject of a grave and formal complaint to the Synod. The author was considered by some as impiously attempting, by means of them, to demolish the whole Secession Testimony, and to shake the very foundations of the christian church; and, in an official document published some time after this, by the brethren who withdrew from the Synod, they were formally declared to be one of the grounds of their separation.

Another individual who pled the cause of forbearance, was Mr George Lawson of Selkirk, the learned and pious Professor of Divinity to the Associate Synod. Mr Lawson published a pamphlet, entitled, *Considerations on the Overture lying before the Associate Synod, respecting some alterations in the Formula concerning the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion; and the obligation of our Covenants, National and Solemn League, on posterity*. As Mr Lawson's views on the subject of the overture were the same as those of Mr Dick, and as he employed similar arguments (though extended to greater length) in urging upon his brethren the duty of forbearance, so he shared liberally in the reproaches that were cast upon his friend. His "Considerations" were peculiarly offensive to some of the brethren, because it was regarded as a heinous sin for a Professor of Divinity to plead for forbearance on such important points as were involved in the overture. Not only were replies addressed to him from the press, in the form of "Letters," † and other instructive modes of communication; but

\* Sermon by Mr Dick. Pp. 32-36.

† See a series of Letters addressed to the Rev. Mr Lawson, entitled, *An Effectual Remedy to the Disputes presently existing in the Associate Synod*

his pamphlet had a similar honour conferred upon it with Mr Dick's Sermon, by being made the subject of formal testimony-bearing on the part of the separating brethren.

I shall here insert an extract from Mr Lawson's pamphlet, that my readers may see what were the sentiments which that eminent man entertained on the great question which is at present agitating the churches in our own and in other countries. If he had lived during the reign of Charles II., of heresy-suppressing memory, a pamphlet containing such sentiments as the following, on the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, would no doubt have been burned by the hand of the common hangman; and the author would, in all probability, have been rewarded for his temerity in publishing it, by being gibbeted at the Grass-market. But as the golden age of intolerance was now past, and as magistrates had become altogether careless about their duty, and no longer gave themselves any concern about suppressing heresies in the church by means of the sword, what more could those do, who loved compulsory measures in religion, than lament over the publication of such sentiments by a Seceding Professor of Divinity, and testify with all their might against them!

"A prudent man," observed Mr Lawson, "will look well to his goings, and will avoid every thing that may sting his conscience with unceasing remorse. He will not rashly give his vote, if he is on a British jury, to take away the life of his brother and friend. Far less will he be rash, in a christian synod, to give his vote for a decision which may well be esteemed a virtual sentence of deprivation to many

*respecting the Formula*: By the Rev. William Taylor, minister at Levenside (afterward at Perth). See another series of Letters addressed to the same gentleman, entitled, *A Smooth Stone from the Brook*: By the Rev. William Willis, minister at Greenock (afterward at Stirling). These publications will stand a comparison with the most admired productions that have issued, during the strife of the present day, from the Anti-Voluntary Church press. They abound in figures of speech that are well suited to a controversial style of writing; and they may be studied with great advantage by those pamphleteers and speech-makers, who are at present attempting to put down, by force of imagery, the "perjured" and "apostate" Seceders.



of his brethren. Suppose we join in such a vote in the present case, it will be for one of these two reasons ; either because we think that compulsory measures are principles of the doctrine of Christ, or because we think that no such doctrines are taught in our Confession of Faith, and that those who think so have themselves to blame for their mistake. I cannot see that a third reason, different from either of these, can be imagined. Let us consider, whether either of them is such as ought to satisfy our consciences that we do well in the exercise of such severity to our brethren.

“Those who approve of compulsory measures in religion, no doubt, must think that their brethren err who disapprove of them. But let them judge fairly and candidly. If they do not obstinately shut their eyes to the truth, they must see that themselves have openly professed the same principles of toleration with their brethren, or at least exercised forbearance hitherto towards those who openly avowed these principles. What is the difference between those who formerly declared against compulsory measures in religion, and those who now plead in favour of the overture ? Only this, that the former took the liberty to declare their mind, in opposition to doctrines which, in the views of those I am now addressing, stand in our standard-books ; whilst the latter endeavour to obtain a constitutional liberty to declare their minds, that neither they nor their brethren may seem to condemn themselves in that which they allow.

“If there are any (I suppose they are few) who still plead for compulsory measures, and, on that ground, declare against the overture, that is, against the exercise of forbearance towards their brethren who think differently from themselves, I think they would do well to bestow a little attention on this consideration ; with what grace it will appear to the world to deny forbearance to their brethren, or, in other words, to do what lies in them to inflict an ecclesiastical death upon a considerable number of brethren whom they love, and whom they highly esteem, for no other reason but their aversion to compulsory measures in religion. Compul-

sory measures in religion are represented, throughout the book of the Revelation, as a characteristic, not of the woman clothed with the sun, but of the scarlet-coloured whore. John wondered with great admiration, when he saw this woman drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. He would have wondered with greater admiration, if he had seen the woman clothed with the sun, drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs. Are not the saints martyrs of Jesus, who suffer the loss of their offices, or usefulness, dearer to them than life, that they may maintain a good conscience ; although they should labour under an involuntary mistake, even about those points which are the grounds of their sufferings ?

“ So odious are compulsory measures in religion, that they have, for the most part, been disavowed or transferred to others, even by those who have practised them. Men who suffered for religion have been generally represented as traitors, or seditious members of society, although they were the meekest and most quiet in the land. For what reason ? Because nature itself reclaimed against impositions on conscience, and that with such a loud voice, that inquisitors themselves, the chief ministers of the kingdom of Moloch, could not bear the character of persecutors.

“ Compulsory measures in religion are one of those distinguishing marks of Antichrist, against which protestants have loudly testified, when they smarted under them ; and against which, I think, they ought at all times to testify, that they may be found faithful witnesses against the beast, during the whole period of his reign. They are called witnesses in the book of New Testament prophecies ; and ought not all the capital abominations of the beast, mentioned in these prophecies, to be the subject of their testimony ? But can we consistently with common sense testify against this abomination in the beast, if we bear testimony, at the same time, against those who are averse to his compulsory measures.” \*

\* Considerations on the Overture, &c. p. 54-56.

Petitions and complaints were presented to the Synod, concerning the above mentioned publications, from the sessions of Cumbernauld, Levenside, and Shotts ; also from members belonging to the congregations of Stirling, Shuttle Street (Glasgow), Crawfordsdyke (Greenock), Kennoway, and Kilpatrick. A petition on the same subject, from the congregation of Orwell, was brought by protest before the Synod. The presbytery of Dunfermline had refused to transmit the representation of this congregation, on the ground that it contained personalities against two of their brethren (Messrs Dick and Lawson), which it was not becoming in them to sanction. Against this refusal of the presbytery the congregation protested ; and when the cause came before the Synod, their protest was dismissed as ill-founded.

Such was the ferment excited by the discussions concerning the proposed alterations in the Formula, that when the Synod met in April 1797, no fewer than forty-one petitions from sessions and congregations were presented on the subject. Of these, twenty-seven were *against*, and nine were *in favour of*, making alterations ; while five craved delay. After members had delivered their sentiments, the following motion was proposed by Mr James Hall, one of the ministers of Edinburgh :—

“ That the Synod defer the consideration of the alterations in the second and fourth questions of the Formula till a future meeting ; it being understood, that when this cause shall be re-considered, intimation of such design shall be given at the meeting of Synod which shall precede the discussion of it ; and that when they re-consider this cause, they shall not give a final decision on it, till they have given sufficient information to all concerned : and, in the meantime, that the following declaration be prefixed to the present Formula, and read before the questions in it be put at licence or ordination, viz. That whereas some parts of the standard-books of this Synod have been interpreted as favouring compulsory measures in religion, the Synod hereby declare, that they do not require an approbation of any such principle



from any candidate for licence or ordination : And whereas a controversy has arisen among us, respecting the nature and kind of the obligation of our solemn covenants on posterity, whether it be entirely of the same kind upon us as upon our ancestors who swore them, the Synod hereby declare, that while they hold the obligation of our covenants upon posterity, they do not interfere with that controversy which has arisen respecting the nature and kind of it, and recommend it to all their members to suppress that controversy, as tending to gender strife rather than godly edifying.” \*

Another motion was proposed by Mr Michael Gilfillan, minister at Dunblane, to the following effect :—“ That the Synod dismiss Mr Fraser’s petition, and the overture of the committee, and adopt the following overture, to be prefixed to the Formula, and read when the questions in it are put at licence and ordination, viz. That whereas, &c. (the same as in the former motion to the end), it being understood, that the Synod shall not revive this cause, till they have given sufficient information to all concerned.”

These two motions were put to the vote, when a majority of the Synod declared in favour of the latter. Before the vote was taken, Messrs Knowles, Greig, Lothian, Cockburn, and Shirra junior, dissented from either of the motions being the state of the vote.

Against the decision of Synod the following persons entered their dissent :—Messrs James Hall, James Peddie, John Dick, George Lawson, George Russell, Robert Jack, William Shaw, William Hadden, Thomas Leckie, Robert Hall, James Dewar, John Leitch, William Kidston junior, James Gilchrist, James Yule, James Dick, Hector Cameron, and Alexander Lata.

In reference to the two motions, that were proposed to the Synod, it may be observed, that the explanatory declaration (or Preamble), was common to both. No mention is made in the records of Synod of any members being opposed to

\* This declaration, which was prefixed to the Formula, was usually designated by the name of the *Preamble*.

the adopting of it ; with the exception of the four already mentioned. If there were any others, who opposed the adopting of the Preamble, they must have been few in number. The chief difference between the supporters of the motion that was carried, and of the one that was lost, was, that the latter wished the Synod to delay, in the present agitated state of the sessions and congregations, coming to a final decision on the overture about forbearance, as they wished the question to be left open for discussion till a more favourable period ; whereas the former considered it proper to bring the question, without farther delay, to a final determination, by dismissing Mr Fraser's representation and the committee's overture, and agreeing, at the same time, to prefix the above explanatory statement to the Formula.

With regard to the explanatory declaration, or Preamble, a question has been agitated with considerable keenness, viz. Whether it was consistent with the avowed principles of the Synod to prefix such a declaration to the Formula ? Those who left the Synod, and who assumed to themselves the title of " Original Burghers," maintained that the adopting of the Preamble implied in it a dereliction of those principles, which had previously been held by the Secession Church, concerning the power of the magistrate in matters of religion, and concerning the obligatory nature of the national covenants. Those who adhered to the Synod maintained that it implied no such dereliction. In so far as the covenants were concerned the Preamble expressly affirmed, that the Synod " held the obligation of our covenants upon posterity." How, in the face of such a declaration, it could be maintained that they had renounced the obligatory nature of the covenants, is a matter which it is not easy to explain. The affirmation was as plain as language could make it ; and no fault, certainly, could be reasonably found with the Preamble, as to any ambiguity on this point. If the Synod declared, that they did not interfere with the controversy which had arisen " respecting the nature and kind of this obligation," there was surely no heresy in such a declaration. It effected

no change in any principle. It was merely a declaration of non-interference with a controversy, which they were not called upon to determine. It left the question concerning "the nature and kind" of the obligation exactly where it found it.

But the most debateable point in the Preamble is that which refers to "compulsory measures in religion." The Synod declared, that they did "not require an approbation of any such principle from any candidate for licence or ordination." By this declaration, the Synod were considered by those who afterwards left their communion, as abandoning the principle, that the magistrate ought to have power in matters of religion; for, it was affirmed, if he have power at all, it must be "compulsory." According to this view of the declaration, it was regarded as a thorough disowning of the connexion between the church and the state. If this interpretation be correct, then it must be admitted, that the Preamble did contain in it a change of principle. But this was not the view which the Synod took of the matter; and at the time the Preamble was adopted, there was no one party in the Synod who understood the declaration concerning compulsory measures in religion to imply in it a total disowning of the power of the magistrate in matters of religion. That the majority of the Synod, by whom the successful motion was carried, did not mean, by adopting the Preamble, to disown the power of the magistrate *circa sacra*, is sufficiently evident from the circumstance of their *rejecting* an overture, which required them to make this doctrine a matter of forbearance. With the exception of an individual or two, the whole of those brethren, who afterwards accused the Synod of abandoning their principles, voted with the majority on this occasion; which shows that *even they* did not at first consider the Preamble as inconsistent with the avowed doctrine of the Secession on this point. Those who voted in the minority, for the unsuccessful motion, took the same view of the Preamble that their brethren in the majority did; for in one of their reasons of dissent they declared,



that “the court, by the present decision, have *finally declared their judgment, that the civil magistrate has power in matters of religion, though they seem to deny him a compulsory power.*” That nearly the whole, if not the whole of the Synod, understood the declaration in the Preamble, when it was first adopted, to be completely consistent with the doctrine which the Secession Church held concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, is placed beyond a doubt by the facts now stated.

What then did the Synod mean by not requiring an approbation of “compulsory measures” in religion from candidates for licence or ordination? They meant that they did not require any one of their licentiates or ministers to approve of the magistrate having power to propagate religion by offensive arms, or the power of suppressing heresies and enforcing religious duties by civil punishments. Their doctrine was, that while the magistrate ought to have the power of interfering in matters of religion, the extent and mode of his interference ought to be such as are consistent with a free toleration granted to all who may dissent from the established religion. No attempt ought to be made by him to compel others to embrace the national faith, or to put down by force any form of a religious profession made by others, in opposition to this faith. All that they meant in the Preamble was to disown the doctrine of persecution for conscience sake.

Whether these sentiments be right or wrong in themselves, or whether the phraseology, employed in the Preamble to express them, was the happiest that might have been adopted, is not at present the question. The question regards a mere matter of fact, viz. Whether these were the sentiments entertained by the great majority of the Synod at that period: and that they were so, is placed beyond all reasonable doubt by the statements already made. No proposition was ever made in the Synod, that an act should be passed by them, declaring that the magistrate should have no power in matters of religion. The only proposal made on this subject,

was that which was brought forward by the committee in their overture, requiring that the Synod would make this article a matter of forbearance. The Synod refused to do so. They dismissed the overture; and they prefixed to the Formula a declaration *explanatory of the sense* in which preachers and ministers were understood to give their assent to the doctrine of the Confession of Faith on this point.

When the Synod declared that they did not require an approbation of compulsory measures in religion, they adhered strictly to the doctrine which had previously been asserted, on several occasions, by the church to which they belonged. It has already been shown, in a preceding part of this work, that, about ten years after the commencement of the Secession, the Associate Presbytery condemned, in an act passed by them (3d February 1743), “the dangerous extreme of espousing principles in favour of propagating religion by offensive arms.” When the Associate Synod published, in 1778, a “Re-exhibition of the Testimony,” it contained the following declaration:—“It must be acknowledged, that the enforcing of religious duties with civil penalties, and, in too many instances, blending the affairs of church and state with one another, is totally inconsistent with the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom.”\* When the Synod adopted, in 1797, the Preamble, they did nothing more than *renew* the declaration which had been once and again made, before that period, by the church courts of the Secession.

Those persons who at first gave their sanction to the adopting of the Preamble, and who afterwards affirmed that the Synod adopted it with a fraudulent intention, were guilty of calumny against their brethren. They made an affirmation, from which every honourable minded person would have shrunk. They advanced a charge, in support of which they had not the slightest shadow of proof, except what was furnished by their own evil surmisings. To say that the phrase “compulsory measures in religion,” is ambiguous, and *may* be so interpreted as to include in it every

\* P. 90.

degree of power exercised by the magistrate, in reference to religion, certainly does not prove that the Synod intended it should be so understood. They affirmed that this was not the meaning which they attached to it—that they understood by it nothing more than *persecuting* measures in religion; and they justly considered, that they were not renouncing any principle held by their Fathers of the Secession, when they declared, that they did not require any in their communion to approve of such measures. Common courtesy forbids that we endeavour to affix to the language of individuals, a meaning which they themselves explicitly disown.

A ferment was excited in some of the sessions and congregations, by the adopting of the Preamble, and means were industriously employed to foment and keep alive a spirit of discontent. Pamphlets were circulated with great assiduity. The pulpit resounded with anathemas against the Synod for having abandoned their profession. Discussions concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters, and concerning the obligatory nature of the covenants, became frequent among the village coteries. Many were the learned discussions which issued from the lips of the gifted, on these edifying topics. Printed forms of petition were sent to the quarters where discontent prevailed, that they might receive the signatures of those whose hearts were grieved at the thought of the Synod having dropped the whole Secession Testimony. The result of this agitation was, that when the Synod met in September 1798, printed petitions were presented from several sessions and congregations, craving that the Synod would set aside the Preamble which they had adopted in the preceding year. These petitions gave rise to much discussion. After a long debate, it was moved, “That whereas the Synod is precluded, by their deed in April last year, from entering on the immediate consideration of these petitions, allow them to lie on the table till a future meeting, the Synod hereby giving notice to all concerned, that they will then resume the consideration of the whole cause respecting the Formula.” A



counter-motion was made, " That the Synod finds, that in consequence of its deed, in April 1797, it cannot grant the prayer of the petitions, and therefore dismisses them ; but, at the same time, the Synod declares that it will be at liberty, at a future meeting, to recur to the discussion of the cause respecting the Formula, and hereby gives intimation to all concerned." The first of these motions was carried by a great majority ; and a question being stated, whether the consideration of the petitions should be resumed at the meeting in April next year, or delayed till the meeting in September, it was determined to delay the consideration of them till September.

During the interval that was thus permitted to elapse, the ferment did not abate, but rather increased. Several additional petitions were laid upon the Synod's table, at their meeting in September 1799. A considerable degree of interest had been excited by the preceding discussions, and there was a full muster of members present at this meeting. After a discussion which lasted during two sederunts, it was moved by Mr James Hall, " That the Synod adjourn the farther discussion of this question till a future meeting of Synod ; and, in the mean time, appoint a committee of the house to draw up a Synodical address to the people of their charge, expressive of our adherence to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church of Scotland, and for repelling the calumnious reproaches which have been circulated in the public, that the Synod, by what they have done in this business, have abandoned their avowed principles, and that this is designed to be the fore-runner of future and more dangerous innovations." A second motion was proposed by Mr William Willis, " That the Synod dismiss the Preamble, and appoint a committee to draw up an address to the public, in order to remove any undue impressions made on the minds of the people." A large majority decided in favour of the first of these motions ; ninety-one members having voted for it, while only twenty-eight voted for the second.

Messrs William Fletcher, William Taylor, and William Watson, ministers, with ten elders, dissented from this decision ; and Mr Willis gave in the following protestation, to which Mr Ebenezer Hyslop, and two elders, adhered :—" I protest, in my own name, and in the name of all ministers, elders, and private christians who may adhere to this protest, that as the Synod hath obstinately refused to remove the Preamble prefixed to the Formula, and declare their simple and unqualified adherence to our principles, I will no more acknowledge them as over me in the Lord, until they return to their principles."

Mr Hill recorded his dissent in the following terms :—" I George Hill, minister of Cumbernauld, do, in mine own name, and in the name of all who shall adhere to my dissent from, and protest against, this deed of Synod, in retaining the Preamble to the Formula, hereby declare my adherence to our received principles, and that I shall be at liberty to testify against this deed from the pulpit, or otherwise, and shall also be at liberty to afford relief to all who are aggrieved by this deed, and shall adhere to the same principles with myself, and to carry this my dissent farther at next meeting, if I shall see cause." Mr Porteous declared his adherence to Mr Hill's dissent.

As Messrs Willis and Hyslop had declared in their protest, that they were no longer in connexion with the Synod, their names were erased from the roll ; and all who adhered to them, were declared to have cut themselves off from the communion of the Associate body. The presbytery of Glasgow were enjoined to intimate this decision to the congregations of these brethren, and to take care that the interests of these congregations should not suffer.

A committee having been appointed, in accordance with the above resolution, to prepare an address, a draught was submitted to the consideration of the Synod, during its present meeting ; and, after some corrections were made upon it, the committee were enjoined to get it printed and circulated among the congregations, without delay. The address

was written in a style of great manliness, and was eminently fitted, by the plainness and honesty of its statements, to remove any false impressions that might have been produced by the proceedings of the Synod concerning the Formula, and to restore confidence to the minds of those who were in danger of being led away by the misrepresentations of prejudiced or interested individuals. As this question excited no small turmoil among many of the congregations belonging to the Burgher portion of the Secession; and as the Associate Synod were loaded with a plentiful share of abuse, for presuming to declare that they did not require any preacher or minister to approve of compulsory measures in religion, I shall allow that reverend body to be heard in their own defence, by giving one or two extracts from the address which they published on this occasion. After perusing these extracts, the reader will perceive that the outcry which was raised against them, by the small section who seceded from them, was altogether unreasonable.

The object which the Synod had in view, in publishing the address, is stated by them in the following language:—  
“ For the information of the ignorant; for rectifying the mistakes of those who have been misinformed; for re-assuring the minds of those who have been taught, that we have renounced our peculiar principles; for allaying the fears of such as are not so much alarmed for what the Synod have done, as apprehensive that it is only introductory to more serious and dangerous alterations; and for silencing those who have cruelly abused the simplicity of their neighbours, by defaming our characters, misrepresenting our public Synodical deeds, and ascribing to us principles which we solemnly disown, and designs of which we are unconscious;— we have deemed it expedient to state our own conduct, and the reasons of it, in our own words. We are entitled to demand to be heard; and we are persuaded, that as much christian temper has survived the present irreligious feuds, even in those places where they have raged with most violence, as to obtain for us what we ask, to be listened to with



candour, and to have our conduct examined deliberately before it be condemned. We shall keep nothing back from public inspection, persuaded that the more our conduct is known, the less it will be condemned; and we ask no favour, unless this should be deemed one, to take our own representation of our principles and views, rather than the account of those who may be prejudiced, and must know them less perfectly than we do ourselves. We trust that we have not deserved to fall so low in the estimation of any of our people, as not to be able to obtain belief to what we explicitly and solemnly assert."

As it had been maliciously insinuated, that the discussions in the Synod, concerning the proposed alterations in the Formula, had originated in a spirit of disaffection to the civil constitution of the country, and as a suspicion had thereby been excited in the minds of those in power, unfavourable to the loyalty of Seceders, the Synod, in their address, repelled, in a tone of honest indignation, this charge; and they made an explicit declaration of their unabated attachment to the reigning family, and to the form of government that obtained in Britain; after which, they endeavoured to disabuse the minds of those who might be prejudiced against them, by stating the precise nature of the controversy which had agitated their congregations. The following passages contain the very marrow of the controversy; and the reader will find in them an excellent illustration of the apostolic declaration, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

"The controversy among us, indeed, respects the power of the civil magistrate. It is not, however, a political, but an ecclesiastical dispute. It respects not the power which the civil magistrate actually possesses by the constitution of Britain; but the power which is supposed by some to be ascribed to him doctrinally in our standard-books; and it respects even this, only in reference to matters of religion. The question is, Whether the magistrate ought to interfere with the decisions of church-courts in matters which are purely ecclesiastical, and to compel men to be of the reli-

gious profession of the State? Nor has even this question ever been proposed as a matter of dispute before the Synod. The Synod have never presumed to say what is the precise measure of his power in matters of religion, nor to intermeddle with the private sentiments of their ministers and elders on this point. It is a matter of too difficult discussion to be rashly determined, or to have its limits exactly ascertained and inserted in our terms of communion. But it becomes interesting, in as far as it is supposed to be asserted in our standards; for their doctrine is sanctioned by the public vows of all the ministers and elders of our communion; and it becomes necessary to their integrity, that their views correspond, in the exactest manner, with the grammatical meaning of the terms.

“ Here, then, is the point in dispute: What is the precise meaning of our standard-books on this article? Do some parts of them teach the right of the civil magistrate to use compulsory measures in religion? Or do they not? All agree that compulsion, or the employment of civil pains and penalties, to enforce religion, is anti-scriptural. Our forefathers, in the Secession, in the most explicit manner, condemned enforcing our covenants by such means; and have stated their general views on the subject of the magistrate's power, in their answers to Mr Nairn. But a difference of sentiment exists on the question, Whether any expressions in our standard-books sanction doctrine which the Seceding body have virtually condemned? Those who oppose the Preamble, affirm that they do not; or at least they explain them in such a manner as to satisfy their own minds, and therefore insist to dismiss it as unnecessary. Others are persuaded that such doctrine is taught in them; and, not thinking themselves at liberty to explain away, what to them appears to be the obvious meaning of the terms, by any private interpretation, insist for relief, either by the Preamble, or by some other more expedient mean.

“ The Synod have not presumed to determine the meaning of our standards on these points; much less have they

dared to condemn them as teaching unscriptural and anti-tolerant doctrine. But they are not surprised that many of their members were, and continue to be of opinion, that they give to the civil magistrate a power inconsistent with their doctrine elsewhere, respecting the headship of Christ, and the liberties of conscience. The known opinions and practices of the times when our Confession was composed, favour their supposition; and the doctrine which they apprehend it to contain, has been condemned by a body of Seceders, who were once of us, and who are generally accounted as firm in their attachment to ancient principles, as we are ourselves. The Synod revered the scruples of their brethren on this point, therefore, as proceeding from delicacy of conscience in the matter of a solemn vow, and considered them as entitled to every relief which could constitutionally be given them. They deemed it necessary, for the consistency of the Secession Church, that her profession should, beyond controversy, in every thing be consistent with itself. They thought it proper, for the character of the body, that no doubt should remain, whether they hold persecuting principles; and that those who have affirmed it of them should be put to silence by an explicit avowal of their sentiments; and the Preamble was adopted as the least objectionable method that occurred, of attaining at once these several objects.”\*

On the 2d of October 1799, the two brethren (Messrs Willis and Hyslop), who had renounced the authority of the Synod, met at Glasgow, along with Mr William Watson, minister at Kilpatrick, who had by this time sent his declinature to the moderator of his presbytery; and, after some time spent in prayer and praise, and in consulting what course they ought to pursue, they agreed, along with their elders present, to constitute themselves into a presbytery, independent of the Synod. The designation which they assumed, was that of the *Associate Presbytery*.† They

\* Address of the Associate Synod, &c. pp. 6, 10–14.

† This was the commencement of that section of the Secession, familiarly known by the name of “Old Light,” or, “Original Burghers.”



agreed also to receive accessions from all who were willing to join them, and to grant supply of sermon to those who might make application for it. In the month of November, Mr George Hill, minister at Cumbernauld, renounced his connexion with the Synod, and became a member of this newly formed presbytery; and, in the course of the following year, their hands were strengthened by the accession of the following ministers:—Mr Patrick Connal, Bathgate; Mr William Taylor, Levenside; and Mr John Jarvie, Perth. Mr Jarvie's paper of accession, contained in it a "representation of his sufferings." "Being thrust out of his church by his colleague, he craved some members of presbytery to preach for him, and comfort him with their presence." The name of Mr Thomas Portecus of Orwell, was next added to their roll.

No sooner had Mr Watson withdrawn from the communion of the Synod, than some members of his congregation, who wished to adhere to their old connexion, commenced a process before the Lords of Session, for the purpose of having it declared, whether the place of worship, and other property of the congregation, should belong to the party adhering to the Synod, or to the party who had left it. In one of the petitions presented to the court, in this process, by Mr Watson's agent, the substance of which was published in the newspapers, charges and insinuations were thrown out, that tended to bring into discredit the character of the Synod for loyalty. It was strongly insinuated, that, under the pretext of religion, they were endeavouring to throw loose, points connected with the most important political doctrines, which every sincere christian was bound to acknowledge and maintain; and the attention of the Lord Advocate, in his official capacity, was solicited from the Bench, to the merits of the present question, as involving matter of much political moment and concern.

Alarmed at being thus charged with disloyalty to their sovereign, and with entertaining designs hostile to the constitution of their country, some members of Synod, when

they understood what had passed in the court, immediately called a meeting of such of their brethren as could be most readily assembled. At this meeting it was determined to enter an appearance in their own name, and for their brethren in the Secession, as concurrents in the process already commenced. This resolution was adopted by them, in consequence of advice which they received, that it was in this character alone “ they could stand forward to repel the injurious attacks which had been made upon them, and to give such information to the court, and to the world, as would serve to convince them that the decisions of the Synod, respecting their Formula, had no reference to any political measures whatever.” The Lord Advocate\* having found, from a full investigation of the business, that the Synod had been grievously slandered, cheerfully consented to become their counsel; and a reclaiming petition, drawn up by his Lordship, was presented to the court.

When the Lords of Session were about to deliver their opinions on this petition, and on the answers which had been prepared by the opposite party, the Lord Advocate considered it to be his duty to repel the calumnies which had been raised against the Synod, and their adherents, by addressing the court in the following language:—

“ Before your Lordships enter on the consideration of this cause, I think it proper to trouble your Lordships with a few words respecting what has been said of the loyalty of those for whom I appear. And the opinion which I am now to deliver, I do not deliver as their counsel, but in my official character. I think it necessary I should deliver it in this character, from this circumstance particularly, that when this case came first under the consideration of the court, I was called on from the Bench, to attend to it as the public prosecutor. In this character, therefore, I think it my duty solemnly to declare that, from every thing which I have studied, and read, and investigated, with respect to the mo-

\* Mr Maconochie.

tives of those persons who brought forward and supported the proposed alterations in the Formula of the Associate Synod, I have every reason to be satisfied with their loyalty, the loyalty of their Associate Synod, and that of the great body of the people they represent. And this declaration I make, not from any application from those individuals who have taken the lead in this business, nor from any partiality to them as their counsel; but I think myself bound, in justice, to express, in this public manner, my deliberate and firm belief that their motives and conduct, and those of their brethren, in this religious controversy, have not had the most distant connexion with disaffection to the constitution and government of this country; and I will add, that, so far from considering this matter as any obligation on me to look after those persons in their public conduct, it is my conviction that disloyalty, in matters of State, was and is as foreign to their minds and hearts, in the whole of this affair, as they can possibly be from the breasts of your Lordships at this present moment."

The Synod highly approved of the conduct of those ministers who had thus stepped forward to vindicate, at their own risk, their brethren from the charge of disloyalty which had been so wantonly brought against them. They adopted the following resolution, as expressive of their sentiments upon the subject:—"The Synod having always held sedition in abhorrence, and conscious of their loyalty to their king, and attachment to the civil constitution of their country, cannot hear without astonishment, that such a charge should have been brought against them by those who all along witnessed their proceedings, and never once objected to any part of said proceedings on that ground, till they thought proper to separate themselves; agreed in approving of the conduct of the ministers of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and others concurring with them, in coming forward for their vindication from so groundless a charge, in returning their warmest thanks to them for their brotherly services in said vindication; and resolve to bear with them the expenses which have been in-



curred by it, and to appoint a committee to watch over the cause till brought to a conclusion, in so far as respects the vindication of their character."

After the Synod's committee had given to the Lords of Session all the information which they considered necessary for convincing them, that the decisions concerning the Formula had no connexion whatever with politics, and after the above manly and honourable declaration had been made by the public prosecutor, completely acquitting the Synod, both to their Lordships and to the country, of any disloyal design, the committee considered that the object of their appointment had been gained; and they resolved, therefore, to withdraw from any farther concurrence in the process which was still carrying on respecting the property of the congregation at Kilpatrick.

One of the dignitaries of the national church took an ungenerous advantage of the disputes, which had been carried on concerning the Formula, in the Associate Synod, to aim a deadly thrust at the character and usefulness of the ministers belonging to this section of the Secession. The dignitary who acted such an inglorious part, was Dr William Porteous, one of the ministers of Glasgow. This officious person thought proper to write and publish a pamphlet, entitled, *The New Light Examined; or, Observations on the Proceedings of the Associate Synod against their own Standards*. The object of this pamphleteer was to hold up the ministers of the Synod to the scorn and indignation of their country, as a set of factious and designing men, who were alike destitute of religious principle and of patriotism. He represented them, not merely as abandoning the principles of their own church, and introducing dangerous innovations into the religious society with which they were connected, but as plotting the overthrow of the government, and subverting the very foundations of civil society. In so far as dark insinuations and indirect charges could go, he did what he could to rouse against them the jealousy, and to draw down upon them the vengeance, of the rulers of the country.

If the leading men of the Synod were not subjected to incarceration, or banished beyond seas to some of the plantations, it was certainly not the fault of the Rev. Dr Porteous. I shall here insert, from the pamphlet of this reckless writer, a few specimens of the bold statements that were made by him, concerning the evil designs that were entertained by those able and enlightened men, who, at this period, took an active part in the proceedings of the Burgher Secession. After perusing them, the reader will be able to judge how far the individual who penned them was under the influence of that charity, "which thinketh no evil."

Speaking of the proposed changes in the Formula, which the committee recommended to the Synod to adopt, the pamphleteer charitably observed:—"Now they will have nothing in common with the Church of Scotland, not even her standards, which they themselves had subscribed, as the confession of their faith, which they were solemnly engaged to adhere to, and according to which they had bound all parents of their persuasion to educate their children. Now every fence is to be pulled down by the daring hand of innovation, and every thing which promised stability to the cause of protestantism, is to be removed. We behold the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the famous Church of Scotland, set afloat on the stormy sea of the present times; and the Seceders—the Burgher Seceders!—committing this frail bark to the variable winds of innovation, or the fierce tempest of infidelity." \*

In the committee, which had been appointed to review the questions in the Formula, a discussion had taken place concerning the phraseology in which the question relating to the national covenants should be expressed. One party in the committee proposed to approve of these covenants, "as a solemn engagement, on the part of our fathers, to cleave to the *truths* of Christ, and to hand them down to succeeding generations?" Another party proposed to ac-

knowledge the obligation of them, “as far as they respect a solemn engagement of adherence unto all the *truths and ordinances* of the Lord Jesus Christ, as contained in our Confession and Catechisms.” A considerable majority were in favour of adopting the first of these modes of expression.

On these proceedings of the committee, Dr Porteous founded the following remarks:—“It is evident from this statement, that the principal difference between the majority and the minority, in this committee, respected the word *ordinances*, as contained in our Confessions and Catechisms. It will not immediately occur, why there should be a debate, and a division of the committee, with respect to the admission of this word *ordinances*. It is, therefore, proper to remark, that, in all our standards, the powers that are, are described as being *ordained* of God, and civil government as being the *ordinance* of God; this is their uniform language; and if the majority of the Associate Synod had this in their eye, the rejecting of this word amounted to a declaration, that the authority of the powers that are, and that civil government itself, is not a matter of fundamental importance; but, on the contrary, is a matter of ‘doubtful disputation;’ and that a person denying the lawfulness of all civil government, may be admitted to ministerial communion with the Associate Synod. Though such a man is wholly unqualified for social intercourse, and ought to be expelled from the society of *men*, yet he may be admitted to christian fellowship and ministerial communion with the Associate Synod!” \*

In the overture of forbearance, the Synod had declared, that “they wish to fear God and honour the king.” The Rev. Dr Porteous found treason in these few words. “The meaning,” said he, “of these words will be obvious to every man. They *wish* to honour the king: if they did honour him, they would not have expressed themselves in this manner; at least, any person of the most seditious principles may employ these terms.” †

\* New Light Examined. P. 42.

† Ibid. P. 34.



An expression which occurred in the Preamble, viz. "The standard-books of this Synod," excited no small horror and indignation in the bosom of Dr Porteous, and drew forth from him the following rare specimen of malignant criticism :—"The expression, 'standard-books,' is new, and not very accurate ; for the book is not the standard, but the doctrine contained in that book. It is comfortable, however, to learn, that they acknowledge any standard ; and, from the whole history of this affair, we see clearly what they mean by their standard-books ; not the Scriptures, but the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the two Covenants ;—these are henceforth to be considered as the Confession of Faith *of this Synod*, the Larger Catechism *of this Synod*, the National Covenant *of this Synod*, the Solemn League and Covenant *of this Synod*. Every man will be sensible of the oddness and absurdity of these expressions ; yet they have an important and dangerous meaning, which cannot now be mistaken. The doctrines contained in these books, are no longer to be considered as fundamental articles of the Secession, as having been retained when they separated from the Church of Scotland, to be made the basis of a new association. In that case, they could neither be abrogated, altered, or explained, but by the authority which made them obligatory, which existed prior to the existence of this Synod. But, by representing these standards as their own, they claim the privilege of extending, limiting, and fashioning them as they please, as their religious views or political creed may direct. Indeed, their whole reasoning goes to this conclusion, that these standards are not fundamental articles of confederation ; for such articles cannot be altered without the dissolution of the society. Nor are they standards ; for a standard that may be varied at pleasure, is nonsense ; or, if it has any meaning, it is this, that the Associate Synod, as lords of conscience, can alter the fundamental articles of the Secession ; to-day they may admit Democrates (democrats?), and to-morrow, atheists. The people are not considered as having any interest in the

standards of the Synod. They must either go along with the Synod, and abandon the principles of that very society which they composed and constituted, and which they still support; or they must abandon the Synod, and adhere to their own established principles." \*

This libeller of the Associate Synod was not permitted to pass unanswered and unchastised. The defence of the Synod was undertaken by Mr James Peddie,† one of the Secession ministers in Edinburgh. He published a pamphlet, in reply to Dr Porteous, entitled, *A Defence of the Associate Synod against the Charge of Sedition: Addressed to William Porteous, D.D.* For dignified reproof, for caustic severity, for pointed and lucid statement, and for a thorough exposure of blundering and sophistical reasoning, this pamphlet stands almost unrivalled in the annals of controversial warfare. The castigation which Mr Peddie inflicted on his opponent, was administered with the hand of a master, and must have been felt, by the subject of it, to be dreadfully severe. But it was not more severe than merited. Such lessons of severity are occasionally necessary, to teach men the folly and danger of interfering (as was the case in the present instance) in matters with which they have nothing to do.

Having presented the reader with a few specimens of the malevolent charges which were brought by Dr Porteous against the Synod, for the purpose of destroying their character and usefulness, I shall here quote the reply which Mr Peddie gave to the Doctor's learned criticism on the expression above mentioned, "The standard-books of this Synod."

"You enliven your remarks on the manner in which we speak of our standards, with observations truly ingenious. These are partly grammatical, and partly moral. You ought, in pity to us, as a Synod of illiterate men, to have spared your grammatical remarks on our style. It may be, since *you* say it, that the expression, 'standard-books,' 'is new, and not very accurate;' and we acknowledge that we stand not

\* New Light Examined. Pp. 48, 49.

† Now Dr Peddie.

so high in the literary world, as to have a right to coin new phrases, even for our own use. We had proceeded on the supposition, that ‘standard-books’ was as classical an expression as standard-gold, standard-silver, standard-weights, standard-measures, which occur in good authors; and our heads were not so full of metaphysics, as to be able to see how, if the *books* are our standards, as you allow, it was inaccurate to call them our *standard-books*. But surely, Sir, this remark was dictated by some nobler motive than the idle vanity of showing the Seceders, and the public, your grammatical skill. Was it your purpose to show that we are not true Seceders, not friends to legal establishments, not loyal citizens, because, in your opinion, we are not classical writers? Or did it proceed merely from an impotence of resentment, which induced you to persecute our very grammar?

“I would have disdained to take any notice of this little, absurd, malevolent criticism, had it not been for remarks of another kind which you have connected with it. You sagely remark, that ‘the book is not the standard, but the doctrine contained in that book.’ Pray, whether do you mean, by saying that ‘the book is not the standard,’ to contradict yourself, whose current language it is to style these books *our standards*, or us who have presumed to style them *our standard-books*? I deplore the case of the Seceders: you will gag them most effectually; for you reprobate their language as inaccurate, and, after you set them right, you will not permit them to adopt your own.

“We thank you, Sir, for the information, that ‘the *book* is not the standard, but the *doctrine* contained in that book.’ Seceders, especially those of the modern stamp, are a stupid and superstitious race! They have an excessive and absurd veneration for their standards! They always thought, till you undeceived them, that the *book*, as distinguished from the doctrine which it contains, that is to say, the paper of the book, the characters of the book, not the doctrine taught by these characters impressed on that paper, was the stan-



dard ! But ‘ a standard which may be varied at pleasure,’ you assure us, ‘ is nonsense ;’ and as the doctrine contained in the Confession may be expressed in characters of various size, on paper of various fineness, and on pages of various lengths, we shall henceforth endeavour not to confound the book with the doctrines contained in that book ! ! !

“ It is pleasant to observe how you coil your arguments about us, and with serpentine agility twist and untwist it, in the hope of crushing your ignoble prey. We have, according to you, too much, and, at the same time, too little attachment to the Confession of Faith. Now, we renounce it altogether ; anon, we substitute it in the place of our Bible ; and we are made by you to do the one or the other, as it suits your purpose. That you have charged us with renouncing it, every reader of your pamphlet knows ; yet, with strange inconsistency, you charge us with making this book, which you say we have rejected, the ground and reason of our faith ; for you say, ‘ we see clearly what they mean by their standard-books,—not the Scriptures,—but the Confession of Faith, the Larger Catechism, and the two Covenants.’ Is this, Sir, or the sarcastic compliment which precedes it, worthy a man of your years and station ? Is it so praiseworthy to attack the Seceders, that absurdity and self-contradiction will be justified by the patriotism of the design ? or must we consider you in these opposite remarks as equally sincere or insincere ?

“ You add, that ‘ a standard that may be varied *at pleasure* is nonsense.’ Yes, Sir, it is nonsense, if by ‘ at pleasure,’ you mean the pleasure of every private individual of a society ; but if by it you mean the pleasure of the society of which he is a member, it is sound sense. A standard is what is appointed by the community to regulate the conduct of individuals in those matters of which it is the standard ; the private individual is not at liberty to employ lighter weights or smaller measures than the standard ; nor to believe differently from the standard-*book*. But the authority which appointed the standard, has right to alter it ; and, in fact, the

standard in coin, in weights, in measures, has in all countries undergone alterations : Yea, in the reformed Church of Scotland herself, the standard has been altered ; or if you say it has not, pray tell me where were her standards before the year 1647, when she adopted the Westminster Confession ? Yet I will not be so unjust to her as to say, what you have said of the Associate Synod ; that her Assemblies, 1647-8, ‘ as lords of the conscience, altered the fundamental articles’ of the Church of Scotland.” \*

Mr Peddie concluded his reply to the Rev. Dr Porteous in the following terms :—“ Sir, I am but a young man compared with you ; yet permit me, before I conclude, to give you one advice. If you be that real friend to your king and the constitution which you profess, never hereafter attempt to serve them, either by going out of your own proper sphere, or by bringing charges of disloyalty against those who are, in every respect, as good citizens as yourself. You may please yourself with the idea that, in thus collecting and publishing the suspicions of your own mind, you are recommending yourself to those in power, and doing essential service to your country. But in fact you do it, as well as yourself, extensive and serious injury. The more your charges obtain credit, the greater is the injury you do ; for if you once deprive men of their reputation, you take from them one principal guard of their virtue ; and the resistance to temptation is commonly weak when there is no character to be lost by compliance. And should you succeed in persuading the world that the Burgher Secession are a body of seditious men, you will not only sour their tempers against a country which is unjust to them, but would take away almost every worldly motive to continue the loyal and dutiful people which they have heretofore been. \* \* \* I have treated you with freedom, perhaps with asperity ; but when I meet with a fair and honourable adversary, I promise him very different usage. This is my apology : You have attacked the religion, the loyalty, the common sense of my brethren

\* A Defence of the Associate Synod, &c. P. 48, &c.

and myself. You have attempted to ruin us, our families, and our flocks ; to deprive us of character, of liberty, yea of life. How could I speak smoothly to such a man ! When I saw the title of your pamphlet, I pronounced on its merits. I was never yet mistaken in my conclusion, that when an adversary, or his sentiments, are nicknamed in the title page, what follows it is low and contemptible stuff.”\*

As the expression in the Preamble, “ Compulsory measures in religion,” had been misunderstood and misinterpreted, the Synod, at their meeting in September 1800, agreed to insert in their minutes the following statement explanatory of their views, with regard to the power of the civil magistrate :—“ That it is the duty of the christian magistrate to be a praise to them that do well, and a terror to evil doers, such as contemptuous profaners of the holy name and Sabbath of the Lord, and perjured persons, as disturbers of the peace and good order of society.” They also appointed a committee to write a friendly letter to the separating brethren, stating to them the mischievous consequences of division in the church of Christ, the unwarrantableness of their present conduct, and inviting them to a friendly conference with the members of those presbyteries, where they might reside, to see if any expedient could be devised for effecting a re-union.

The committee appointed to correspond with the separating brethren reported, in April 1801, that they had written a letter to each of these brethren ; but that none of them had returned an answer, with the exception of Messrs Watson and Taylor. The Synod agreed to proceed no farther in the business, until the letter sent by their committee should be acknowledged by the rest of the brethren.

In the month of September, 1805, the brethren, who had withdrawn from the Synod, found that their number had increased by ordinations and accessions to fifteen ; and they resolved to constitute themselves into a synod, under the designation of “ The Associate Synod :” but that they might

\* Defence of the Associate Synod, &c. Pp. 76, 77.



not be confounded with the ecclesiastical judicatory, from which they had separated, they have ordinarily been known by the distinctive appellation of "The Original Burghier Synod." The party who left the Synod was so small, and the influence of those who composed it was so inconsiderable, that no serious loss was sustained by their departure. Men of unprejudiced minds were at a loss to find on what ground this separation had taken place. Though the separatists declaimed loudly against the Synod, for having abandoned their original principles as Seceders, yet there were few persons in the country so clear-sighted as to be able to discover wherein the change of principle consisted. It is now a matter of history, that when an investigation was made into the truth of this allegation, before the highest law tribunals of the country, it was declared from the Bench, after a long and patient hearing of the two contending parties, that there was not the slightest foundation for such a charge being advanced.

The decision, to which a reference has now been made, deserves a place in this record, both on account of the connexion which it has with this portion of the Secession history, and also because it shows what was the opinion entertained, by neutral persons, concerning the conduct of those brethren who renounced the communion of the Synod. It was declared that they had left the church to which they belonged *without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the Synod.*

Mr John Jervie, and his colleague Mr Jedidiah Aikman, ministers of the Burghier Associate congregation in Perth, espoused opposite sides in this controversy; and when the separation above mentioned took place, Mr Jervie renounced his connexion with the Synod, while Mr Aikman continued firm in his adherence. The congregation were divided in sentiment as well as the ministers. One portion went along with Mr Jervie, while another portion held the same views as Mr Aikman; but each party claimed the property of the congregation as its own. An appeal to the courts of law was the

consequence. A long and expensive litigation ensued. The determination of the question was regarded with considerable anxiety by the Synods, to which the contending parties severally belonged; for upon the issue of this process depended the property of other congregations, besides that of Perth. The grand object of those who had left the Synod was to show, that the Synod (and of course the party adhering to it), by adopting the Preamble, had abandoned the original principles of the Secession Church, while they themselves still continued to maintain their original ground; and that, of course, they were entitled to the exclusive possession of the place of worship, seeing that it was built and upheld for the maintenance of these principles. It was upon this point, that the ultimate decision of the question was made to depend. For when the process was carried by appeal before the House of Lords, this was the principle laid down by Lord Chancellor Eldon, as the ground on which judgment ought to be pronounced; but as it had not been made evident to their Lordships, that the Synod had abandoned any of the principles hitherto maintained by the Secession Church, it was remitted back to the Court of Session, to get this point ascertained.

Upon this single point, then, both parties concentrated their strength before a tribunal, the members of which could not be supposed to entertain the slightest partiality in favour of either. Every effort of learned ingenuity and of legal argumentation was put forth by the pursuers (or Old Light\* party) to show, that the Synod had moved away from the ground which their predecessors in the Secession had always occupied. Their failure was complete. So far from being able to establish, to the satisfaction of the Lords of Session, the truth of the allegation, which they had so confidently advanced, their Lordships were convinced by the arguments of the opposite party, that no change of principle had taken

\* This phrase is used without the slightest disrespect; it is employed merely as a distinctive appellation, this being the designation by which that section of the Secession Church is ordinarily known.

place ; and they gave their decision accordingly. After the usual quantity of answers, replies, and duplies had been given, the court pronounced the following interlocutor :—

“ *Edinburgh, February 18, 1815.*—The Lords having resumed consideration of the petition, with condescendence, answers, replies, duplies, and whole cause, Find, That the pursuers, James Craigdallie and Others, have failed to condescend upon any acts done, or opinions professed, by the Associate Synod, or by the defenders, Jedidiah Aikman and Others, from which the Court, so far as they are capable of understanding the subject, can infer, much less find, that the said defenders have deviated from the principles and standards of the Associate Presbytery and Synod. Further find, That the pursuers have failed in rendering intelligible to the Court on what grounds it is that they aver that there does at this moment exist any real difference between their principles and those of the defenders ; for the Lords further find, That the Act of Forbearance, as it is termed, on which the pursuers found, as proving the apostacy of the defenders from the original principles of the Secession, and the new Formula, never were adopted by the defenders, but were either rejected or dismissed as inexpedient, and that the Preamble to the Formula, which was adopted by the Associate Synod in the year 1797, is substantially and almost *verbatim* the same as the explication, which the pursuers proposed in their petition of 13th April, 1797, to be prefixed to the Formula, and to which, if it would satisfy their brethren, they declared that they were willing to agree : Therefore, on the whole, find it to be unnecessary now to enter into any of the inquiries ordered by the House of Lords, under the supposition that the defenders had departed from the original standards and principles of the Association, and that the pursuers must be considered merely as so many individuals who have thought proper voluntarily to separate from the congregation to which they belonged, without any assignable cause, and without any fault on the part of the defenders, and therefore, have no right to disturb the defen-



ders in the possession of the place of worship originally built for the profession of principles from which the pursuers have not shown that the defenders have deviated; therefore sustain the defences and assoilzie; and in the counter-action of declarator, at the instance of the defender Jedidiah Aikman and Others, decern and declare in terms of the libel, but find no expenses due to either party.

“Signed 21st February 1815.” “C. HOPE, *I. P. D.*”

The history of that small section of the Secession, who formed themselves into a separate synod, in the circumstances now detailed, presents little that is interesting. Until of late, they have not occupied a prominent place in the public eye. After the keen spirit of testimony-bearing, with which they were, at the commencement, strongly impregnated, cooled down into the temperate degree, they pursued the tenor of their way with little noise or ostentation.

Soon after they had constituted themselves into a synod, they republished the “Act, Declaration, and Testimony” of the Secession Church; and being grieved in heart at the conduct of their former brethren, in retaining the Preamble, they were pleased to “acknowledge, declare, and assert” their adherence to the original Testimony, “in opposition to every part of this new scheme.” They also published, in a separate pamphlet, an Appendix to the Testimony, containing “A Narrative of the origin, progress, and consequences of late innovations in the Secession; with a Continuation of that Testimony to the present times.” The “Narrative” gives an affecting description of the manifold evils resulting from the “new scheme,” and places in a captivating light, the purity and fidelity of those few brethren who had the honesty to leave the Synod, and the courage to step forward and lift up the fallen Testimony, when it was in danger of being completely trampled under foot. The “Continuation” of the Testimony consists chiefly of a series of condemnatory sentences pronounced upon almost all the

sections of the christian church in this land ; so that no person desirous to maintain a good conscience, could safely be connected with any one of them.

It may be edifying to the members of the Established Church to know the opinion that was entertained of them (as a church), about thirty years ago, by those who are now their fondest admirers, and most active auxiliaries. The opinion which the Original Burghers entertained of their brethren in the Establishment, at the period when the "Continuation" was penned, was sufficiently low. In this document we find the following account given of the state of the national church :—"Error in doctrine, and oppression in ecclesiastical administration, constituted the leading evils which drove the first Seceders from the bosom of the church, and drew forth their Act, Declaration, and Testimony, in their defence. Since that period, the proceedings of the ruling party in the General Assembly *have greatly increased the list of grievances* ; the friends of truth and of principle are held in derision, and those who preach the gospel in purity, display a most stumbling conformity in co-operating with the enemies of the cross." "Instead of learning from experience the many evils originating from the law of patronage, or taking measures to have the liberties of the christian people, in this great concern, restored to them, the General Assembly have lent their aid in its support, and in defiance of all the complaints against it, and opposition to it, by reclaiming parishes. And even where the opposition has been most general, *the farce of moderating a call* has been uniformly acted by the presbyteries to whom such parishes belonged." \*

A few years ago, an attempt was made to effect a union between the Original Burgher and Original Anti-burgher sections of the Secession. A correspondence was opened between the Synods of these two denominations ; committees were appointed, and conferences took place, with a view to arrange the terms of the union. But after some time

\* Appendix. Pp. 101, 103.

spent in fruitless negotiation, neither party were inclined to renounce their particular views on the original points of difference, and the idea of accomplishing a union was given up. The Original Burghers, however, have of late years become much enamoured of the national church, and have made a formal proposal to be received into its communion. The proposal has been favourably entertained by the General Assembly. A committee, appointed by the Original Burgher Synod, has held conferences with a committee of the Assembly, to discuss the terms of a union; and, according to the reports given, from time to time, by the convener of the Assembly's committee, these conferences have been conducted in an amicable spirit. At the last meeting of the General Assembly (May, 1838), a motion was made and agreed to, that a committee be appointed to prepare an overture, authorizing a union betwixt the national church and the members of the Original Burgher Synod. An overture, to this effect, has been prepared and transmitted to presbyteries for consideration, that they may either approve of, or reject it. So far as the discussions of these local judicatories have been made public, the overture has met with a favourable reception; and there is every probability that it will be sanctioned by a large majority of them.

The Original Burgher Synod, at their meeting in the month of May (1838), agreed, by a considerable majority, to delay coming to a final resolution on the subject of the proposed union, till their next meeting; that, during the interval, the presbyteries and sessions connected with their association, may have the whole documents under consideration, and may be prepared to state "how far the terms finally obtained from the General Assembly are satisfactory." Along with this resolution to delay, the Synod embodied the following declaration:—"It being understood, that, in case they shall decide in favour of re-union, on the basis of the General Assembly's overture, the Synod shall, preparatory to the union, subscribe a bond, pledging itself, by the use of every constitutional liberty secured to it, to follow out the design



of its testimony, and the cause of reformation sworn to in our national covenants." Against this decision of the Synod, in favour of delay, thirteen ministers and several elders protested, and reserved to themselves full liberty to act in this matter as they shall see cause.

Whether the mass of the people, connected with the Original Burghers, shall be equally willing, with their ministers, to return to the bosom of the national church, is a question which remains to be decided. That a portion of them will acquiesce in the proposed union, is certain; but that a considerable proportion of them will, in spite of the blandishments of national endowments, continue to adhere to the original Testimony of the Secession Church, is more than probable. It is difficult to perceive on what grounds the members of a church, who have all along professed a more than ordinary attachment to the Secession Testimony, can consistently connect themselves with the Establishment, seeing that all the evils are still to be found in it, against which they have hitherto been testifying. Error in doctrine, the existence of the law of patronage, relaxation of discipline, and oppression in ecclesiastical administration, constituted the chief grounds on which the Secession originally took place. And has any one of these grounds been removed? That erroneous doctrine, of the most pernicious description, is taught in many of the pulpits of the national church, is admitted both by churchman and dissenter. The law of patronage also still exists. When a motion was brought forward in the General Assembly, about two years ago, to declare patronage a grievance, and to adopt measures for the removal of it, the motion was rejected by a large majority. The right of the christian people to choose their own ministers, was scouted by the speakers belonging to the two antagonist parties in the Assembly. Not one individual in the House could be found to advocate the cause of popular election. On the contrary, it was publicly declared, that popular election, should it be granted, would prove a curse to the Church of Scotland. This declaration was

made, not by one of the *moderate* party, but by one of the chief speakers on what is ordinarily termed the *popular* or *evangelical* side of the House. No one, who attends to the state of ecclesiastical discipline in the Established Church, will affirm, that it has, of late years, undergone any perceptible improvement. A case of refusal of admission to the table of the Lord, or an instance of suspension or expulsion from communion, on account of the grossest immorality, is but of rare occurrence. Sealing ordinances are indiscriminately dispensed to persons of all characters, and of all grades of opinion. The chief term of discipleship is, that the person applying for privileges be resident within the bounds of the parish, and express his willingness to be connected, by a nominal tie, with the national church. How can the state of discipline in the Establishment be otherwise, when, according to one of their own writers, there are men occupying her pulpits, “who preach socinian, or pelagian, or arminian heresies, while they subscribe a calvinistic creed.” \* Again, with regard to mal-administration, have we not seen several instances occur, even within the short period since the *вето* act was passed, of ministers being intruded into parishes, in opposition to the expressed wishes of a decided majority of the parishioners? † The above statements show, that, though there may be a disposition manifested, in some particulars, to accommodate measures to existing circumstances, owing to the great excitement of the times, yet the general principles on which the administration of affairs is conducted in the supreme judicatory of the national church, continue the same as ever they were. They are intolerant in their nature, oppressive in their operation, and decidedly hostile to the rights of the christian people.

On what ground, then, can those congregations, connected with the Original Burgher Synod, join the Established Church, so as to become with them one ecclesiastical body?

\* See Synod sermon by the Rev. Dr Burns of Paisley.

† The cases here specially referred to, are those of Dreghorn, Trinity-Gask, Dron, and Eskdale-muir.

They can do so consistently only on one ground, and that is, by avowedly “dropping” the whole Secession Testimony, which they and their forefathers have hitherto held, and by submitting unconditionally to the supreme authority of the dominant church, identifying themselves with all its errors, corruptions, and abuses. And is it really come to this with any section of the Secession Church? Are they prepared to make an unconditional surrender of those principles, for which, as Seceders, they have hitherto been contending? Are they prepared to sanction, by a union, those evils against which they have so long and so loudly been testifying? Were it not for the fraternal embraces which have already passed between the contracting parties, and the high eulogiums which they have been pronouncing on each other’s excellencies, I would have considered an affirmative answer to these questions as altogether beyond the range of probability.

But then it is affirmed, that the Original Burgher Synod have “agreed to subscribe a bond,” preparatory to the union, pledging itself “to follow out (after the union has taken place) the design of its testimony, and the cause of reformation sworn to in our national covenants.” It will certainly be a singular way of “following out the design of their testimony,” and of promoting the cause of reformation, to join the communion of a church, where, it is admitted, errors and corruptions abound, and where the obligations of the national covenants have about as much weight as the Koran itself. Subscribe a bond to follow out the design of their testimony in the bosom of the national church! No idea can be more quixotic than this. What will those men, who subscribe a calvinistic creed, while they preach socinian, pelagian, or arminian heresies—what will those men, who have denounced popular election as a curse, and who have publicly declared that patronage “is a part of the Establishment under which the people have enjoyed so many blessings,” \* — what will

\* See Lord Moncrieff’s speech on the patronage question, in the Assembly of 1836.



such men as these care for the *testifying* of their new auxiliaries? They will laugh it to scorn.

But, even admitting that they will be permitted to follow out the design of their testimony, without being subjected to censure or ridicule, will it be prudent or safe in them to expose themselves and their people to the contamination of socinian, pelagian, or arminian heresies, by joining the fellowship of a church, where such errors are tolerated? How can such conduct be reconciled with the apostolic injunction, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" "Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Besides, will they not, by accomplishing such a union, come under the following sentence of condemnation, which they have pronounced in their Testimony against the evangelical ministers of the national church, when they affirm, that "those who preach the gospel in purity, display a *stumbling conformity*, in co-operating with the enemies of the cross." \* In "following out the design of their testimony," after they have entered the Establishment, it will be necessary either to expunge or to alter this part of their testimony-bearing; for should the sentence now quoted be permitted to stand in the new edition of the Testimony, the same as it is in the old, it will be constantly staring them in the face, and giving pain to their consciences, by recalling to their remembrance the language of the prophet Nathan, "*Thou art the man.*"

Whether the brief history of the Original Burgher Synod shall terminate in the manner now contemplated, a short time will determine. I shall only add, in concluding this chapter, that should their history, as a distinct religious society, terminate in the manner proposed, it will indicate, on their part, a change of sentiment much greater than that of which they accused the Associate Synod, when they withdrew from their communion; and, from the revolution which

\* Continuation of the Testimony. P. 101.

they are about to undergo, in passing from a state of Secession into a state of "stumbling conformity" with those against whom they have, from their earliest existence, "displayed the banner of a testimony," they may learn to exercise, for the future, a greater degree of charity in judging of the motives and actions of others, seeing that the step which they are about to take, will render a large demand on the charity of their fellow-men necessary, in judging of the purity of their motives.

## CHAPTER IX.

Mr Mason of New York visits Scotland. Application made by him to Synod for preachers. Application favourably received. Several ministers accompany him to America. Articles of correspondence betwixt American Reformed Synod and Associate Synod. Alarm excited by invasion. Address to the King. Synod publish an address to their people. Petition to the Synod from managers of Royal Infirmary for aid. Liberal collections made. Letter of thanks from managers. Movement in favour of British and Foreign Bible Society. Scanty supply of students of divinity. Committee appointed on the subject. Overture concerning students. Reproof administered to students. Letter from Reformed Synod in America. Answer by the Synod. Petition from Halifax in Nova Scotia. Mr Robson sent to Nova Scotia. Enlargement of Psalmody. Renewal of East India charter. Petition to Parliament about missionaries. Termination of the war. Address to the Prince Regent. Day of thanksgiving. Overture about education. Overture rejected. Letter from moderator of Original Burgher Synod. Associate Synod's answer. Four ministers sent to Nova Scotia and Canada. Union of presbyterians in Nova Scotia. Union of Seceders in Ireland. Gaelic missions. Memorial presented to Synod on the subject. Committee appointed. Report on religious state of the Highlands. Sanctioned by Synod. Gaelic preachers trained up. Opposition made to Secession Missions in Highlands. Religious destitution in Highlands. Unjust complaint against dissenters. Death of Professor Lawson. His character. Rev. Dr Dick elected Professor. Missions of Irish Secession Synod.

IN the summer of 1801, Mr John Mason, minister in New York, and a member of the Associate Reformed Synod of America, paid a visit to Scotland. One of the objects of his visit was to obtain a supply of preachers for the churches in America. He was welcomed by the Associate Synod as a



brother. They invited him to take a seat amongst them, as a corresponding member; and having received from him a statement of the principles and order of the Reformed Synod, they agreed to recognise that society as a sister church. They also pledged themselves to assist him, to the utmost of their power, in procuring the necessary supply of labourers for the transatlantic churches; and they appointed a committee to co-operate with him in accomplishing the object of his visit. When the Synod called for the report of this committee, it was stated that the following persons had offered their services as transatlantic missionaries:—Messrs James Scrimgeour and Robert Forrest, ministers; Mr James Paterson, preacher; and Mr Robert Bishop, student; and the following list was, at the same time, presented, of ministers, probationers, and students, to whom a recommendation was given to take into consideration the call given in providence, to go and promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, by preaching the gospel in America, viz.—Messrs Hugh Jamieson, Hector Cameron, George Campbell, Alexander Harper, John Leitch, David Inglis, John Cowper, William Taylor, John Rae, John Jamieson, James Dick, James Thorburn, Robert Easton, and James Harrower, ministers; Messrs Robert Blackadder, James Laurie, John Burns, William Gibson, George Young, George Wigton, David Paterson, Andrew Marshall, James Robson, and David Blackadder, probationers; and Messrs Robert Moffat, Robert Hunter, James Paterson junior, John Craig, Walter Dunlop, and Adam Thomson, students of divinity. In order to induce ministers and preachers to undertake this mission, it was declared, that should any of them be desirous of returning to their native country, after labouring for a few years in America, the Synod would receive them with brotherly affection, and would assist in defraying the expenses of their journey homeward.

As several of these persons were in Edinburgh at the time the Synod was holding its meeting, the committee conversed with them individually on the subject; and notice was sent

to those who were not present, of their being nominated to this honourable work, with a request that they would take the matter into consideration, and return a definite answer to the committee, before the next meeting of Synod. The result of this movement was, that when Mr Mason sailed for America, in the beginning of September 1802, he was accompanied by Messrs James Scrimgeour, Robert Forrest, Robert Easton, Alexander Calderhead, Robert Bishop, and James Laurie.\* In the following year, Mr John Burns, after receiving ordination in this country, sailed for the same destination.† Mr James Paterson, probationer, who had offered his services, was prevented from fulfilling his benevolent intention, by falling into consumption, which brought him to an untimely grave. He was a young man of good talents, of an amiable disposition, and of high promise. Had it pleased God to spare him, he would have occupied an honourable place among the labourers in the American churches.

The Synod, having agreed to recognise the Associate Reformed Synod of America as a sister church, resolved, as a means of promoting christian affection between the two churches, to maintain a regular correspondence with their brethren in America. The following articles of union and correspondence were adopted by them, and transmitted to the American Synod :—

1. That there shall be a regular transmission of the minutes of the several meetings of the two Synods to one another.

2. That the transmission shall once a-year be accompanied with a judicial letter, containing such information

\* Mr Scrimgeour had for some time laboured in the ministerial work at North Berwick ; Mr Forrest, at Saltcoats ; Mr Easton, at Morpeth ; and Mr Calderhead, at Horndean.

† In a letter which the Synod received, some time after this, from America, it was mentioned, that Mr Scrimgeour was settled in the town of Newburgh, seventy miles above New York ; Mr Forrest in New York ; Mr Easton in Montreal ; Mr Calderhead in the Presburgh of Monongahela ; Mr Bishop at Lexington, in the State of Kentucky ; Mr Laurie in Washington, the seat of government ; and Mr Burns at Niagara.

respecting the state of religion in the congregations under their inspection, as may be practicable and useful.

3. That the same faith shall be given mutually to testimonials from either of the corresponding churches to the other, that is usually given by the different parts of the same church to one another.

4. That the members of either Synod, who shall occasionally be present at any of the meetings of said Synod, or of the presbyteries in subordination to them, shall, on proper evidence of their character, be invited to act along with them, as corresponding members.

5. That the Associate Synod shall, from time to time, according to their ability, and as the circumstances of the Reformed Church may require, do every thing that is competent to them, to furnish them with a supply of ministers and probationers, to preach the gospel under their inspection.

Some time after this, a communication was received from the Reformed Synod of America, declaring the happiness which they felt in being recognised by their Scottish brethren as a sister church; stating also their formal recognition of the Synod in this relation, and expressing their gratitude for the supply of ministers and preachers which had been sent, and their entire acquiescence in the articles of correspondence which had been proposed.

In the course of this narrative, ample proof has already been afforded of the spirit of loyalty which has animated the Secession, at the different epochs of its history. While it has uniformly thrown its influence into the scale of rational and enlightened freedom, and vindicated the rights of conscience, it has ever been among the most forward in manifesting its attachment to the throne, and in declaring its resolution to support the civil institutions of the country. The charge of disaffection to government, which has been repeatedly preferred against its members (in common with other dissenting societies), by interested and designing individuals, is one which has been belied by the whole course of its history. The conduct of the Associate Synod, at the



close of the last century, and at the beginning of the present, when this country was shaken with internal commotion, and threatened with foreign invasion, furnishes additional evidence in support of the statements that have now been made.

A motion was brought forward in the Synod, on the 26th of April, 1798, to present an address to his Majesty, "on the present critical state of the nation, as threatened with invasion by the power of France." This motion was carried almost unanimously, only two ministers and three elders voting against it; and the ground on which these persons opposed the motion, was, that they considered it incompetent for the Synod, as an ecclesiastical court, to adopt such a measure; while, at the same time, they declared their loyalty to the King, and their attachment to the civil constitution of their country. Mr James Black, one of the opponents of the motion, craved to have his opinion recorded; and the following declaration, made by him, will show what were the sentiments which he, and those who acted along with him, entertained on this subject:—

"I hereby declare, That, while I, as a subject, wish to maintain all loyal affection to our King, and to seek the safety and prosperity of our native land, yet I find myself called upon, in this manner, to testify my disapprobation of this Synod's entering into any discussion respecting an address to our King, in their religious capacity; because I view it contrary to the spiritual nature of Christ. And I hereby also declare, that this disapprobation is, in no respect, to be understood as interfering with what the members of this Synod ought to do in their civil capacity.

"JAMES BLACK."

The address which the Synod presented on this occasion, breathed the very essence of loyalty. I much question if a warmer effusion ever proceeded from the General Assembly itself, even in those halcyon days when the golden links which bind the altar to the throne, were much more firmly

rivettèd than they are at present. Those persons who have hitherto been accustomed to regard all dissenting communities as hot-beds of sedition, and nurseries of revolutionists, will be both astonished and gratified to find such an address as the following proceeding from a society of humble dissenters ; and, after perusing it, they will cordially acquiesce in the opinion, that neither the sentiments which it contains, nor the language in which these sentiments are expressed, would have done discredit to the Episcopal Bench. It is here inserted for the purpose of showing, that, notwithstanding the strong incentives to loyalty, which the ministers of established churches are supposed to have, a spirit of loyal attachment to the throne has by no means been monopolised by them in times past.

“ To the King’s most excellent Majesty, the humble address of the ministers and elders, in their Synod assembled, of that body of dissenters from the Church of Scotland, commonly called Burgher Seceders. May it please your Majesty,

“ We, your Majesty’s very loyal and dutiful subjects, the members of the Associate Synod of presbyterian dissenters, deeply sensible of the blessings of a constitution which secures to all their civil and religious rights, and of the virtues of a sovereign, who, for so many years, has been an example to his people, can no longer contemplate in silence those awful dispensations of providence, under which so many governments have been shaken and overturned, and a great military power raised in the centre of Europe, which, after menacing conquest and revolution to all around it, now seems to direct its concentrated animosity and violence against these realms, threatening with final ruin all that has been there accumulated by the efforts of ages, for the comfort and well-being of man ; and, at the same time, labouring insidiously to unnerve their inhabitants, by disseminating and promoting dissatisfaction with your Majesty, aversion to the constitution, and hostility to the faith of the gospel.

“ At such an eventful period, we beg leave to lay at the

foot of your Majesty's throne, our humble assurances that we will unite in the general effort which the nation must now make for preserving its existence ; and that we will, in the congregations under our pastoral charge, zealously use that influence which, under the mild and equal laws of our country, we enjoy, to arouse them to a sense of their present danger and duty, and recall to their remembrance the examples of attachment to the illustrious house of Hanover, which their fathers in the Secession have shown in former critical emergencies ; and, while we call upon them to look to that God, who holds in his hand the destiny of nations, and to trust in his gracious and superintending providence, we will urge them to act like men who have to contend for all that is dear to them, and to preserve from formidable and inveterate foes, themselves, their families, their possessions, and those invaluable institutions which, according to their respective natures, have proved the sources of civil liberty here, and we trust, the means of eternal salvation hereafter.

“ We humbly beseech your Majesty to accept these assurances of our constant and inviolable fidelity, of our abhorrence of every traiterous conspiracy, as contrary to the Holy Scriptures, and our avowed principles ; and of our sincere and fixed resolution to exhort all within the sphere of our influence, to persevere in their duty and diligence.

“ Sire, we will not cease to pray, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may encompass your Majesty, as with a shield ; that he may abundantly bless your Majesty's royal Consort, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and all the royal family ; that he may sanctify to all your subjects the present alarming dispensations of heaven ; and that he may crown with success the exertions of your Majesty's navy and army, for securing us from invasion, and thus laying a foundation for your Majesty's negotiating an honourable peace.

“ Signed in our name, and in our presence, and by our appointment, at Edinburgh, the 27th day of April, 1798.

“ JOHN JAMIESON, *Moderator.*”



At the commencement of 1803, a considerable sensation was excited throughout the country, in consequence of the discovery of a plot, in which Colonel Despard, and other individuals were engaged, to assassinate the king, and overturn the government. Both houses of Parliament, and other public bodies throughout the empire, presented addresses to the king, congratulating him on his escape. At their first meeting, after the discovery of this plot, the Synod united with their countrymen, in expressing their attachment to his Majesty's person and government, by presenting to him a loyal address.

This same year, the country was thrown into a state of great alarm, in consequence of Bonaparte having renewed his threats of invasion, which had been suspended by the short peace of Amiens. Formidable armaments were assembled on the shores opposite Great Britain, and nothing seemed to be wanting but a favourable opportunity for carrying the intended descent into execution. The danger was considered to be imminent; and, at such a crisis, the energetic co-operation of all classes was imperiously required to repel the enemy, should he actually venture upon such a hazardous undertaking. Every exertion was made by those who possessed influence, to rouse the patriotism of the country, and to prepare the inhabitants for courageously encountering the impending evil. The members of the Associate Synod showed the interest which they took in the welfare of their country, and their anxiety to defend and maintain its institutions, by adopting such measures as were competent to them, as an ecclesiastical court, in order to stir up the people under their charge to co-operate with their fellow citizens in repelling any aggression that might be made by a foreign foe. They appointed a day of humiliation to be observed in all their congregations, "on account of the threatening aspect of Providence toward our country, in the preparations making by our enemies for invading us." They also appointed a committee to prepare a short pastoral address to the people, on the subject of the threatened inva-

sion, representing to them their duty in the present emergency. The following is the spirited address which the committee prepared. After being approved of by the Synod, several hundred copies of it were printed and circulated among their congregations:—

“ DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN,

“ In the course of divine providence, these kingdoms are again involved in the calamities of war, and are contending for their existence against an ambitious and overgrown power, which has subdued or humbled the other nations of Europe. We deem it fit, in the exercise of our pastoral care, to call on you to consider seriously the important duties which you are required, by this awful dispensation, to perform. Under this impression, we have resolved to embrace an early opportunity of assembling with our several congregations, to humble ourselves before God, to supplicate his mercy, to deprecate impending judgments, and to beseech him that he would speedily turn war into peace to the ends of the earth.

“ Brethren ! our enemy, while he is practised in all the arts of cruelty and deceit, is daring in enterprise, brave and skilful in war ; and the iron despotism of his government favours him in the secrecy of his designs, and the suddenness of their execution. Envious of our prosperity, and regarding us with malignant jealousy, as the chief obstacle to his scheme of aggrandisement and dominion, he comes to overthrow our constitution, and destroy our commerce, to plunder our wealth, and to reduce us to a state of abject dependence on his imperious will. In the ruin of our civil privileges, our religion, which is dearer to us than them all, would be involved ; for that man, by turns an infidel, a Mohammedan, and a Roman Catholic, has avowed, in the face of the sun, his contempt of all religion, and wishes to establish an uncontrolled jurisdiction over the consciences, as well as the bodies of men.

“ To provide for those of his own household, and by consequence to defend them, is a duty which our religion en-

joins upon every man who possesses it. A nation is a society of families, united for mutual security and comfort. It is, therefore, not less incumbent upon us as christians, than as men, to join together for the defence of our country, and of those manifold privileges, civil and religious, which a free constitution has transmitted, through past generations, in a degree of unrivalled excellence.

“ The country, which is now in danger, is endeared to us as the land of our nativity, and the depository of the ashes of our fathers and our kindred. It is hallowed by the ordinances of our God, and is become venerable in our eyes, as the place in which we have received spiritual blessings, the earnest and the foretaste of the happiness of heaven. Brethren ! Could you endure to behold such a country invaded and laid desolate by the insulting foe, while you possess the means of repelling the aggression ? As dissenters, you enjoy the most valuable privileges, under the mild and equitable law of toleration ; and are you not ready to testify your gratitude, by contributing to the defence of that excellent government by which they are secured ? It is known to many of you, that your fathers in the Secession Church, distinguished themselves in a former national struggle, by their loyalty and their courage ; and we trust that you will convince the world that you are worthy to inherit their name, and to occupy their post of honour.

“ We exhort and beseech you to stand fast in the evil day ; to quit yourselves like men, and to be strong. Expect not that, in answer to your prayers for protection and deliverance, miracles will be wrought. It is your duty, in humble dependence upon the Almighty, to employ the human means of defence with which you are provided, and to look for his blessing on your vigorous exertions ; and never were men called upon to think more seriously on the deep stake which depends on the issue of the contest. We must shield from destruction that venerable fabric which our fathers formed by their wisdom, and cemented with their blood. We must even struggle for our existence, as a na-



tion, and as individuals, against a foe whose progress has been hitherto marked with murder and desolation. Interest, patriotism, religion, command us to resist, even unto blood, in this mighty conflict.

“ Are you resolved to obey this command? Let the fear of God, and confidence in his protection, give solemnity to this resolution. Life is not to be exposed or assaulted with light or frivolous feelings. In every age, the most devout men have been the bravest soldiers; and still ‘ the people that know their God, will be strong, and do exploits.’ The faith of the gospel, and the hope of immortality, will inspire you with invincible courage, and prepare you for the worst. Then, ‘ if you live, you will live unto the Lord; if you die, you will die unto the Lord: and, whether living or dying, you will be the Lord’s!’

“ Finally, brethren, let us trust in the Lord our God, and continue instant in prayer. His perfections and his promises assure us of what he is able and willing to do for those who rely on his mercy and his power; and the frequent interpositions of his providence, in behalf of our country, encourage us to hope that he will yet stretch out his arm for our salvation. ‘ Our fathers trusted in God; they trusted, and he did deliver them. They cried unto him, and were delivered; they trusted in him, and were not confounded.’ Let their children say, ‘ God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early.’”

Such were the sentiments that animated the members of the Associate Synod at this crisis. A letter having been received by them, during the course of this year, from the Associate Reformed Synod of America, the answer which was

returned, contained the following reference to the state of matters at home :—" Some of our congregations are considerably affected by the stagnation of trade and manufactures, and other evils which have followed the renewal of hostilities with France. But it is no small consolation, that we are perfectly joined together in one mind, with respect to the necessity of supporting the government of our country in this alarming crisis, and of employing the means of defence with which providence hath furnished us. We are confident that you will cordially unite with us, in praying that peace may dwell in our land. If an invasion shall be attempted, we trust that the loyalty and patriotism of our people will not be less exemplary than on a former occasion, nearly sixty years ago, when, after the most strict scrutiny, it was found to the honour of our church, that not one seceder had joined the standard of rebellion.\* We will not be negligent to stir up the people committed to our charge, by putting them in remembrance of these things, though they know them, and be established in the present truth ; and, accordingly, we have appointed an early day to be set apart for solemn fasting and humiliation, in all our congregations, and have prepared a pastoral address, which is to be read from all our pulpits."

A petition was presented to the Synod, in September 1804, from the managers of the Royal Infirmary, in Edinburgh, craving that a collection might be made by the congregations under their inspection, for the benefit of that institution. This petition met with a most favourable reception. The Synod agreed to record the high sense which they entertained of " the uncommon excellence and utility of that institution, not only as a means of cure and relief to many thousands of diseased, sick, and poor people, who resort to it from all parts of the kingdom, but as a practical school of surgery and medicine, happily attached to a theoretical one, from which not only the inhabitants of the united king-

\* See remarks made on the conduct of Seceders during the Rebellion of 1745, vol. i. p. 268.

doms of Britain and Ireland, but of Europe and the world, derive incalculable benefit." They further entered "unanimously, and with the utmost cheerfulness, into the object of the petition, embracing with much pleasure the opportunity which it presented, of doing whatever might be in their power to serve, by this means, the cause of humanity." They most earnestly recommended to all the sessions and congregations under their inspection, to make, as soon as possible, a public collection, or (where it might be judged more expedient), a private contribution for the Royal Infirmary. They ordered the petition which had been presented by the managers of that institution, and their own decision concerning it, to be printed and sent to every session in the Association, "that all might be duly informed of the nature and importance of the purpose for which they were required to contribute, and might be prepared to give liberally, as became men and christians, for the relief of their suffering fellow-creatures." A copy of the Synod's decision was sent to the managers of the Infirmary, and a committee was appointed to carry it into effect. The Rev. Dr Davidson addressed to the committee the following letter, in reply to the communication which had been sent:—

"GENTLEMEN,

*Heriot Row, 22d October 1804.*

"A copy of the minute of your Synod, sent me by Mr Lothian, containing their answer to the petition from the managers of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, requesting their appointment of a collection for the benefit of the Infirmary, in all the congregations of your connexion, I had the honour of laying before the managers at last meeting.

"We could not fail to be gratified with the just sentiments which the Synod entertained, respecting the extensive utility of the Hospital, with their very favourable answer to the petition, and with the handsome manner in which it is expressed. The minute of Synod was ordered to be inserted in our own minutes: and I was requested, in the name of the managers, to convey to the Synod, at their next meeting, through your means, our perfect approbation of the measures they have adopted, and our unanimous thanks for an enactment tending so essentially to promote the cause of humanity.



“ It is with pleasure I have thus fulfilled the desire of my brethren in the management of the Infirmary ; and I am, very respectfully, Gentlemen, your obedient humble servant,

“ THOMAS DAVIDSON.”

The result of this appeal to the congregations of the Secession, in behalf of the Edinburgh Infirmary was highly creditable to the liberality and public spirit of this section of the Secession Church. In the course of twelve months, the sum of £834 : 1 : 1 was paid into the funds of that benevolent institution.

A representation was, at the same time, made in favour of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which had newly sprung into existence. The Synod expressed their “ hearty approbation ” of the object of this society, and their desire to co-operate in promoting it. But as they had so lately given a recommendation to the congregations under their inspection, to make collections for the Royal Infirmary, and as the recommendation had been complied with, in such a liberal manner, they did not consider it expedient to appoint another collection to be made at present. They testified, however, the interest which they felt in the success of the Bible Society, by appointing a committee to take the subject into consideration, and to report concerning the method by which they might most effectually promote the glorious object, which the society had in view. This business was resumed in the following year. It was found that several of the congregations had already collected for the funds of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Synod expressed their approbation of the conduct of these congregations ; and they gave a recommendation to all the congregations, who had not yet made collections for this object, to do so with all convenient speed. Soon after this, associations were formed over the whole country, to aid the British and Foreign Bible Society in their benevolent exertions ; and by no denominations of christians were these associations more generally or more liberally supported, than by the ministers and people connected with the Secession.

At this period, the probationers belonging to the Associate Synod were few in number, compared with the vacant congregations where their services were required ; and the Synod felt themselves greatly fettered in their operations, on this account. They appointed, in April 1805, a committee to consider by what means a more abundant supply of preachers might be obtained. This committee reported, that students, who had been engaged in the study of divinity for four years, should be taken on trials for licence ; and, that in order to encourage young men to come forward and serve God in the gospel of his Son, a more liberal provision ought to be made for the support of ministers. The Synod acquiesced in this report so far, that they authorised the several presbyteries to licence, for that year, those students who had attended the Divinity Hall for four sessions ; and they ordered an address to be prepared and circulated among the congregations, pointing out the necessity of a more ample provision being made for those who ministered at the altar, to encourage young men to devote themselves to the work of the ministry.

Some of the students, who were under the inspection of the Synod, besides attending the prelections of their own Theological Professor, enrolled themselves also, as students, in the Divinity Halls of the Established Church ; and when the season arrived, for their being licensed to preach the gospel, instead of giving the Secession Church the benefit of their services, they thought proper to abandon her communion, and to become preachers in the national church. With the view of putting a stop to this practice, an overture was introduced, April 1806, in which the Synod was required to take into consideration “ the expediency of prohibiting students of divinity in our church from entering as students in the Divinity Hall of any other church.” It was proposed by the framers of this overture, that any student, who should be guilty of such conduct, should be considered as renouncing his connexion with the Synod. The discussion of this subject was delayed till a future meeting. When the Synod

afterwards resumed the consideration of it, there was a diversity of opinion among the members, about the propriety of adopting the overture, and it was allowed to lie on the table without any decision being given concerning it.

The students, who were attending the Divinity Hall, under the inspection of Professor Lawson, at Selkirk, became alarmed for their privileges. They drew up, and forwarded to the Synod a spirited and well-written representation, on the subject of the above overture. In this representation, the students avowed their determination "to enroll as formerly whatever might be the consequences." This determination the Synod justly pronounced to be undutiful and inconsistent with the professed subjection of the students to the supreme court. They testified their "strong disapprobation" of the conduct of the students, in sending such a communication. They admonished them to be cautious how they interfered in any business that might come before the supreme court; and they ordered their clerk to write a letter to Professor Lawson, containing their sentiments on this subject, that he might communicate them to the students, and accompany them with such exhortations as he should judge proper. All this was done, and matters went on as formerly.

During the course of these transactions, the Synod were much gratified with a communication which they received from their brethren of the Associate Reformed Church in America, giving an account of their prosperity, and stating the peculiar difficulty which they had, in their infant state, of procuring an adequate supply of preachers to answer the numerous demands that were made for sermon from every quarter of the Union. In this communication, the American brethren say, "We have reason, amidst all our unworthiness and infirmity, to be deeply thankful. Our divine Head has not deserted us, nor left himself without his witnesses amongst us. With one mouth and harmonious effort, our ministers profess and maintain the faith and order once delivered to the saints. Not one of our pulpits is contaminated



with erroneous doctrine; not one of our congregations has deserted the banner of presbyterial church government. Extensive as is the territory over which we are scattered, reaching from Montreal to Georgia, and from the Atlantic to beyond the Ohio, we have hitherto been enabled to act upon the great principle of church unity, and are now enjoying the mercy of profound peace in our religious borders. Our chief embarrassment arises from a deficiency of labourers in so large a vineyard. The cry for the bread which came down from heaven waxes louder and louder; and the means of supply are but scanty. We have been much helped by the brethren whom you sent to our assistance. The important object, to which our hopes and exertions have been for several years directed, our Theological Seminary, is through the tender mercy of our God at length accomplished. It commenced last November (1805), at the city of New York, with eight students. The prospect of increase and of utility is beyond what even our fondest hopes had ventured to anticipate. Obstacle after obstacle has been removed; our hearts are encouraged, our hands are made strong; and we proceed in the humble confidence that this plant, which the Lord's own right hand hath planted, will be watered with the dews of his blessing, till it grow up into a tree of life, and spread healing influences over our vast continent."

The letter, which the Synod in Scotland sent in reply to this communication, breathed a truly affectionate and apostolic spirit. The following are extracts from it:—"The connexion, brethren, and reciprocal communication so happily established between the Associate Reformed Church in North America, and the Associate Church in Britain, is in our opinion an event of the most auspicious and pleasing kind. In this event many wise and good people on both sides of the Atlantic greatly rejoice already; and many more, we trust, both in the present age, and in all succeeding generations, will feel in it a spring of joy and praise, of gratitude and thanksgiving. Our holy religion is a fruit of the love of God; it is a system of love; it draws men to God and to one another with the cords of

love ; its great object, its ultimate result is to unite completely, happily, and eternally in love the whole church of the living God, collected from all the countries of the world, and all the generations of mankind. What wise and good man but would rejoice greatly in a connexion which points towards an object so highly sublime, and which leads to a result so pre-eminently glorious.

“ The good news which you send us from your distant land tend greatly to strengthen our hands and encourage our hearts in the good work of our common Lord. That in all the borders of our sister church, stretching from Montreal to Georgia, and from the Atlantic to the Ohio, there are soundness in the faith and steady attachment to presbyterian order ; that among all the brethren there are love and peace and among the inhabitants of the land, in general, a continually growing desire for the true bread ; that the brethren sent from us are materially helping the faith and joy of the western church ; and that the so much needed and desired Theological Seminary is opened among you with prospects so fair and pleasing, that such is the state of your church, and such the rising hope of the christian religion in your country, inspire us with pleasure, and make the joy of the Lord our strength. Since we heard these good tidings, we cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in our prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you and your people, and the inhabitants of America, in general, the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, that ye being more and more enlightened and enlarged together, may know still more fully and happily what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to those who believe.”

After referring to the prosperity enjoyed by the Associate Church in Scotland, and to the dark and lowering appearance of the political horizon, not only in Europe, but also in America, the Synod concluded their letter with the fol-

lowing expression of fraternal regard:—" But still whatever shall take place, we cannot forget that the people of the United States are our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh. Above all, we still will remember that *you* are our brethren, in the spirit and fellowship of the gospel of love and peace. We will not cease to commend you to the God of all grace. We will still believe that the very wrath of man shall praise our God. We will expect to see the church of our Redeemer coming out of great tribulation, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners. We will wait for the time when the sword shall be turned into a ploughshare, and the spear into a pruning hook. While we groan under the sins and troubles of the present condition, and weep for the miseries of the world, we will not cease to rejoice in the hope of meeting you, and all the faithful in Christ Jesus, in the kingdom which cannot be moved, in that celestial land, where our purity and peace, and love and joy shall be perfect and everlasting."

In the spring of 1808, an application was made to the Synod, through the Rev. Mr Easton of Montreal, from a number of persons residing on the Salmon River, Lower Canada, for an ordained minister to be sent to break amongst them the bread of life. In reference to this application, the Synod stated, that if any minister or probationer would offer himself for this service, they would do every thing in their power to assist him in accomplishing his object. The application of these people was, in the present instance unsuccessful. A similar petition was presented three years after this (in 1811), from a congregation in Halifax, Nova Scotia. These people stated, that they were both able and willing to support a minister, and were very desirous that one should be sent to them. They remitted a sum of money to defray the charges of his journey outward: and they mentioned, that if, after a trial of six months, he should not find his situation agreeable amongst them, or if his gifts should not be acceptable to them, they would be at liberty to separate; and should he wish, at the end of that period, to return to



Britain, they would bear his travelling expenses homeward. Mr James Robson, minister at Lochwinnoch, agreed to undertake this mission. The pastoral relation betwixt him and his congregation in Scotland was dissolved ; and he soon after sailed for his new destination in Nova Scotia.

A petition from the session of Wells Street congregation, London, brought before the Synod the subject of the psalmody. The session requested leave to make a selection of spiritual songs and hymns, to be used by their church in the praise of God, along with the Psalms of David ; which selection they proposed submitting to the supreme court for its approbation. The Synod deferred the consideration of this petition till a future meeting. In September 1811, this subject was resumed by them ; and, after some discussion, they were unanimously of opinion, that the enlargement of the psalmody was “ a most desirable and necessary object.” The Synod then agreed, that they would take into consideration, at their next meeting, whether permission might not be given to the congregations under their inspection, to make use of the paraphrases and hymns published by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland ; and, in the mean time, they appointed a numerous committee to consider what corrections it might be necessary to make on these paraphrases and hymns, and whether it might not be proper to make additions to them. This committee reported to the Synod, at their meeting in spring, in the following year, that they had particularly examined the paraphrases and hymns of the Church of Scotland ; and they recommended the appointment of a special committee to make a selection from these and other paraphrases and hymns, for the use of the congregations under their inspection ; and, until such a selection be made, that liberty be given to the ministers of the Synod to make use of such of the paraphrases of the Church of Scotland as might appear to them calculated to promote the ends of edification. This recommendation was adopted. A select committee was appointed for the object now specified. Whether the committee made any

progress in the business intrusted to them, I am unable to state. It does not appear that any report was ever presented by them to the Synod.

The renewal of the charter of the East India Company, in 1813, presented a favourable opportunity for procuring liberty to send missionaries to the British dominions in the East. A general and vigorous effort was made by the friends of missions connected with various religious denominations, to obtain the insertion of a clause in the new charter, permitting missionaries from this country to proceed direct to India in British ships, instead of compelling them to take the more circuitous route by America, and also guaranteeing them protection, as British subjects, while engaged in prosecuting their philanthropic labours in India. Petitions were presented to Parliament on this subject from various dissenting communities, and also from many pious persons connected with the Establishment. The Associate Synod gave their hearty co-operation in this labour of love. When they met in April 1813, the following petition was prepared by a committee; and, after receiving the signature of every minister and elder present, was forwarded to both houses of Parliament:—

“ The humble petition of the subscribers, ministers, and elders of the Society of Presbyterians in Scotland, known by the name of Burgher Seceders, met at Edinburgh in their Associate Synod :—

“ SHEWETH,

“ That your petitioners regard with the deepest commiseration the spiritual ignorance and moral degradation of the immense population of the British dominions in India.

“ That in the judgment of your petitioners, the only effectual remedy for the great evils, which afflict that great part of the empire, is to be found in the free diffusion of the knowledge of the doctrines and precepts of christianity among its inhabitants.

“ That your petitioners, convinced that our holy religion is the best friend to peace and good order, are so far from apprehending danger to the British interests in India from prudent attempts to enlighten and christianize that part of the empire, that they consider it as the bounden duty of christians and Britons to use all proper means for this benevolent purpose; and contemplate with pleasure the happy consequences of such attempts, not only in the moral and religious improvement of the inhabitants of India, but in their increasing attachment to the British government, and the greater security of these distant and valuable provinces.

“ May it, therefore, please your Honourable House to provide in the charter intended to be granted to the East India Company, that it shall be lawful for all denominations of his Majesty's subjects to send christian ministers and teachers to India, for the purpose of instructing the nations in the knowledge of christianity; and that such ministers and teachers shall enjoy full protection, so long as they shall act agreeably to the laws, and demean themselves as good and peaceable subjects. And your petitioners,” &c.

The memorable events of the year 1814 excited a tumult of joy in the nation. The success of the allied armies, the abdication of Bonaparte, and the termination of the long and bloody war, in which the nations of Europe had been engaged, produced in the minds of men mingled emotions of gratitude and delight. The members of the Associate Synod participated in the joyful feelings, which these events produced; and at their meeting in spring, this year, they unanimously resolved to present an address to the Prince Regent, congratulating him on the favourable turn which public affairs had taken. In the following year they appointed a day of solemn thanksgiving to be observed in all their congregations for the restoration of peace.

The attention of the Synod was drawn toward the subject of education, by an overture which was laid upon their table, on the 7th of September, 1814. The object of this overture



was to obtain the sanction of the Synod to the erection of schools, in connexion with the congregations under their inspection. The following is an outline of the plan, which it was proposed to adopt:—"That in every congregation, where it is practicable, a school be established for the instruction of children in the ordinary branches of education; that the school be under the management of the minister, and a committee of the elders and deacons, or managers, to whom shall belong the choice of the teacher, the payment of his salary, the fixing of the books and catechisms to be taught, and the school fees, and in general every thing connected with the external or internal economy of the institution; that the number of scholars be limited; that children of persons of every denomination be admissible, but that a preference be given to the children of the members of the congregation; that the teacher have a fixed salary to a certain amount, but that the extent of his income be left in some measure dependent on the success of his own exertions; that provision be made for the education of the children of poor members of the congregation, and, if possible, of other poor persons, either gratuitously or at a reduced rate; that, in order to render the choice of a teacher by the committee of management valid, it be necessary that the presbytery of the bounds should be satisfied with the candidate's abilities and character; that the committee of management visit and examine the school every month; and that the presbytery, or a committee of presbytery, examine the school annually, or more frequently, as shall be found necessary; that in case of any difference arising between the committee of management and the teacher, it be referred to the presbytery."

This overture was allowed to lie on the table till the month of April 1816, when it gave rise to a long discussion. Those who pled for the adopting of it maintained, that, should the Synod give it their sanction, a christian education would thereby be secured to a considerable number of the young members of the church, and to many others; that the number of unqualified teachers would be diminished,

and the exertions of the parochial teachers would be stimulated ; that it would extend and perpetuate the advantages of which the Secession Church was productive to the country ; that it would furnish useful employment to the students of divinity during the term of their theological course ; that it would open up an honourable retreat for those who had been unsuccessful candidates for the ministry ; and, finally, that it would afford opportunities for observing and bringing forward young persons of talent, for future service in the church, who might otherwise languish in neglect and obscurity. Those who opposed the adoption of the overture maintained, that there was no necessity for such a complicated system of machinery being employed to accomplish the object in view ; that the plan, if adopted, would operate, in a great majority of instances, in direct hostility to the established schools, which had been so beneficial to the country ; that it was calculated to cherish an exclusive and illiberal spirit ; and that, by producing a strong reaction, it was likely to defeat itself. The opposition to the overture was successful. When the question was stated, “ Dismiss, or Adopt ? ” it carried by a majority to “ Dismiss.” This resolution, however, was connected with an expression of the Synod’s approbation of the good intentions of those who proposed the overture, and with a recommendation to all under their inspection to pay attention to the religious education of their children. From this decision two ministers and two elders dissented.

At the meeting of the Synod in spring 1816, a letter was addressed to the moderator from the moderator of the Original Burgher (or Old Light) Synod, who were sitting at the same time in Edinburgh. This letter was very brief and enigmatical. It required an immediate and categorical answer to be given to the following question :—“ Are your brethren of the Synod now ready to remove the Preamble prefixed to the Formula, which was the ground of offence and cause of separation ? ” No reason was assigned for proposing this question, and no mention was made of any particular object that was to be gained by an answer being re-

turned to it. The inference deduced from the letter was, that it was an indirect movement made in advance toward a union. If this was the object of the letter, the answer, which the Synod instructed their moderator to return, held out little encouragement that it would be speedily accomplished. The answer (which was addressed to the Rev. Samuel Armour, moderator of the Original Burgher Synod), was to the following effect :—

“REV. SIR, I have received a letter, dated Gray’s Close Meeting-house, 30th April, 1817, and signed by you as moderator, and have taken the liberty to lay it before the Associate Synod.

“The Associate Synod regret that your communication does not enable them to form any precise idea of its object : but though they had been distinctly informed of your design in requesting a categorical answer to it in the course of the day, it was impossible for them, when the court was engaged in other important business, to give an answer within a short space to a question relating to a subject which has been the matter of discussion for twenty years. The assertion, which you quote from the statement of evidence, that the Associate Synod hold the very same principles at this moment which have been professed by them in all periods of their history, was not then made for the first time, but will be found in the Synod’s address to the people of their charge published many years ago. The Synod lament the number of divisions which prevail in the church of Christ, especially among persons who are agreed in their doctrine and church order, and will always be ready to adopt such measures for promoting union among christians, as are calculated to serve the ends of public edification. Meanwhile, I am, Rev. Sir, yours respectfully,” &c.

Since the period of Mr Robson’s departure for Halifax, the Synod had sent four additional labourers across the Atlantic : these were Messrs Laidlaw, Douglas, Taylor, and Bell. Mr Laidlaw was for some time minister of a congregation, in connexion with the Relief, in Dunning. He petitioned to be received into the communion of the Secession Church, with a view to his being missioned to Nova Scotia. The Associate Synod granted his request ; and he left this country in 1814. Mr Douglas undertook his mission, in consequence of an application being made to the Synod for a preacher to be sent to Nova Scotia. He received



ordination from the presbytery of Kilmarnock, and sailed for his destination two years after Mr Laidlaw. Soon after his arrival, he was settled in a congregation in Prince Edward's Island, where he still continues to labour. Mr Taylor had the pastoral charge, for several years, of the congregation of Stonehouse, in Scotland, which he resigned; and, at his own request, the Synod sent him to strengthen the hands of those who were labouring in British America. The scene of his transatlantic labours was Osnaburgh and Williamsburgh. Mr Bell's destination was Canada, to which he was missioned, in accordance with a petition which he presented to the Synod. After he arrived in that country, he became minister of a congregation at New Perth. The expense connected with all these missions was defrayed by the Synod.

Intelligence was received by the supreme court, in 1818, that the brethren under their inspection, in Nova Scotia, had formed a union with their Anti-burgher brethren, and other presbyterians in the same province, and had constituted themselves into a synod, under the designation of "The Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia." The Synod, on receiving this information, did not consider it necessary to enter into any discussion of the principles on which this union had been formed; but agreed to record their opinion concerning them, in general, "that they are such as this Synod can cordially acknowledge the brethren in Nova Scotia as a sister church, and are ready to co-operate with them in promoting the great interests of the gospel, and of the presbyterian government of the church in that part of the world." At the request of several brethren who were labouring in Canada, the Synod agreed, at this meeting, to erect them into a presbytery, in connexion with the Synod at home.\*

\* The brethren who were at this time erected into the presbytery of Upper Canada, were—Messrs Robert Easton, Montreal; William Smart, Brockville; William Taylor, Osnaburgh and Williamsburgh; and William Bell, New Perth.

Notice has been taken, in a preceding part of this volume,\* of an attempt made by the Seceders in Ireland to form a union, which proved unsuccessful. This desirable object, however, was at length happily accomplished. A joint committee was appointed, in 1817, by the two Secession Synods in that country, to make such additions to the original Secession Testimony, as might adapt it to the state of religion in Ireland, "that so it might serve at once as a basis of union, and the public testimony of the united body, in favour of truth and against error." This committee held several meetings, and, in a report which they presented to their respective Synods, they stated, that, though several able papers had been submitted to their consideration, which might serve as a display of "the present truth," yet they had not been able to frame such a document as they could with confidence recommend to be adopted, as part of the testimony of the united body. But they unanimously recommended, that, as the Synods had agreed to take, as a basis of union, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, with the original Secession Testimony, they should forthwith unite, "leaving the adaptation to be afterwards digested, adopted, and exhibited to the world." To inspire both ministers and people with mutual confidence, and to remove every vestige of suspicion that might unhappily be entertained on either side, they proposed that the following be adopted as the articles of union :—

I. The Presbyterian Synod of Ireland, distinguished by the name Seceders, do declare our constant and inviolable attachment to our already approved and recognised standards, namely, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Directory for Worship, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government, with the original Secession Testimony.

II. As we unite under the banner of a Testimony, we are

\* See p. 103.

determined, in all time coming, as our forefathers have set us the example, to assert the truth when it is injured or opposed, and to condemn and testify against error and immorality, wherever they may seem to prevail.

III. We do hereby cancel the names Burgher and Anti-burgher for ever, and unite in one Synod, to be hereafter known by the name of “ The Presbyterian Synod, distinguished by the name Seceders.”

IV. We declare our insubordination to any superior ecclesiastical court ; while, at the same time, we do hereby signify our hearty inclination to hold a correspondence with our sister church in Scotland, or elsewhere, for our mutual edification ; but we think it expedient not to lay ourselves under any restriction as to the manner of said correspondence.

V. We let all the presbyteries and congregations in our connexion bear the same name, and, in the mean time, stand as they were before the coalescence.

VI. We agree carefully to preserve all the records of the two Synods, from their formation in the kingdom, till the present day.

At a meeting of the two Irish Synods, held in Cookstown, July 7, 1818, these articles were discussed by them ; and being approved of, the union was accomplished.

A considerable degree of interest was excited, at this period, in the religious state of the Highlands, by the reports of various members of Synod, who had been appointed, from time to time, to itinerate both in the northern and western districts of that interesting portion of our native country.\* After the return of Messrs Ebenezer Brown and John M'Kerrow from an extensive preaching tour in the Highlands, made agreeably to the appointment of Synod, in the summer of

\* The individuals who were engaged, at different periods, in these itinerating labours in the Highlands, were—Messrs John Brown, sen., Ebenezer Brown, Donald Fraser, John Brown, jun., James Ellis, John M'Kerrow, and Andrew Kennedy. Excursions, for the purpose of preaching the gospel, were also made, by appointment of Synod, in Galloway and in the Stewartry of Kirkcubright, by Messrs Walter Dunlop, John Brown, jun., John Law, and Andrew Scott.



1819, a memorial was presented by them to the supreme court, giving an account of the religious destitution of many of the districts through which they had passed ; stating the eagerness which the Highlanders had manifested to hear the gospel ; and calling upon the Synod to adopt measures for sending to their Celtic countrymen the benefits of an evangelical and faithful ministry, where such a blessing might not already be enjoyed. The following extract from this memorial gives a pleasing view of the spirit of religious inquiry, which has been excited in many parts of the Highlands, by the itinerating labours of pious individuals connected with various denominations of christians :—

“ We may further add, that, in consequence of a considerable proportion of the people being now taught to read their own language, and in consequence of the Scriptures being circulated among them, in a dialect with which they are familiar, the light of divine truth is beginning to break in upon them ; so that they are now, in many places, beginning to know what is the gospel ; and nothing but the gospel will satisfy them. A spirit of religious inquiry has been excited, chiefly by the labours of pious and zealous individuals, who have been in the habit of itinerating from place to place ; so that the people, having now got a tasting of doctrine, with which they were formerly unacquainted, are ardently longing for more. Provided they can only be permitted to enjoy it, they care not from what quarter it comes, or by what instrumentality it is conveyed. When a minister goes amongst them, who has the character of being an evangelical preacher (no matter to what denomination he may belong), the people flock to hear him, and listen with gladness to the message which he delivers. They will travel ten, twelve, and even fifteen miles, to enjoy the benefit of his ministration. We do not say that this spirit exists in every part of the Highlands ; but we say that it exists in very many parts, and that it appears to be daily gaining ground. In the isles, with very few exceptions, the same symptoms are beginning to manifest themselves. To take

advantage of this growing spirit, and to turn it to the very best account, labourers are required ; pious, and active, and zealous men, who shall be able to speak the language, and who shall be accustomed to the habits of the mountaineers. The fields are whitening rapidly for the harvest, and there is a loud call for labourers to go forth and exert themselves in the vineyard of the great Husbandman." \*

In consequence of this memorial, and the representations made by the individuals who presented it, the Synod appointed a committee "to concert measures for affording a more abundant and regular supply of the means of religious and moral improvement to the destitute inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands." This committee presented, at the spring meeting of Synod, in 1820, a long report, embodying a great variety of well-authenticated documents, illustrative of the past and present religious state of the Highlands ; pointing out the inadequacy of the existing means of religious instruction to the wants of the Gaelic population, the deficiencies of the public instructors connected with the Establishment, and the prevalence of the Roman Catholic superstition among the Highlanders ; and detailing the outline of a plan, for the Synod to adopt, with a view to promote the spiritual interests of that portion of our countrymen. The main features of this plan were, that a standing committee be appointed by the Synod, to be denominated, "The Committee of Missions into the Highlands and Islands ;" that the business entrusted to this committee be, first, the training up of pious Highlanders to preach the gospel in their native language ; and, secondly, the employment and maintenance of missionaries, in itinerating throughout the Highlands and Islands ; that the missionaries thus employed be under the inspection, and subject to the discipline, of the Associate Synod ; that presbyteries be at liberty to licence those who are intended for Gaelic preachers, after three years' attendance at the University, and four at the Divinity-Hall ; it being understood, that such young

\* Christian Repository for 1819. P. 603.

men be sent up to the Divinity-Hall before their third year of study at the University.

The Synod unanimously approved of the report which their committee presented, adopted the plan which it recommended, and ordered it to be printed and circulated among the congregations under their inspection. Though the Associate Synod were, immediately after this, united with their brethren of the General Associate Synod, yet the important object of sending the gospel to the destitute districts of the Highlands, was not lost sight of by the United Synod. Several young men, acquainted with the Gaelic language, were trained up under the inspection of the Synod, and sent to labour in the Highland districts. One of these Gaelic preachers,\* after labouring for a short period among his countrymen at home, undertook a mission to Canada, in consequence of an application made by a number of individuals in that country, to send them a minister who was acquainted with the Gaelic language. If the number of Gaelic preachers, who have hitherto been sent forth from the Secession to labour among the Highlanders, be small, when compared with the resources of the Secession Church, and with the wants of the Gaelic population, this has been, in a great measure, owing to the difficulty of procuring persons who were properly qualified, by their talents and piety, for engaging in such an important work. For though it is not doubted, that many such individuals may be found in the Highlands, yet the Synod have had but few opportunities of becoming acquainted with them. Disappointments, too, which they have experienced, have rendered them somewhat cautious in receiving applications.

When the above-mentioned report on the religious state of the Highlands was published by the Synod's committee, attempts were made to throw discredit on the statements which it contained, by an anonymous writer in a religious periodical connected with the Established Church.† A clever and witty article, from the pen of the talented editor

\* Mr Peter Ferguson.

† The Edinburgh Christian Instructor.



himself,\* endeavoured to turn the whole affair into burlesque. The object of these communications, which appeared in the periodical now referred to, was to show, that the inhabitants of the Highlands were not more distinguished for their ignorance or immorality, than the inhabitants of the Lowlands; that their religious instructors were sufficiently competent for the work in which they were engaged, and possessed the entire confidence of their flocks; and that there was no peculiar necessity for missionary exertions being made to supply the religious destitution of these remote districts. Instead of hailing the co-operation of the Secession Church, in the patriotic and benevolent work of diffusing the light of the gospel among the scattered population of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, efforts were thus made, through the medium of the press, to excite a spirit of opposition in the Highlanders against the Secession, and to render abortive any missionary undertaking in which the latter might be disposed to engage, for the benefit of their Gaelic countrymen.

Of late years, a loud outcry has been raised about the lamentable destitution of the means of religious instruction, which exists in the Highland districts; and it has been tauntingly asked, "What have dissenters done for supplying the deficiency of the means of grace, which exists in these districts? Why have the Secession, and other dissenting communities, confined their labours to the populous towns and villages of the Lowlands, instead of going and labouring in these mountainous and thinly-peopled regions of the north?" The taunt is at least ungenerous, if not unjust. The public ought to know, that dissenters have made frequent attempts to carry the blessings of the gospel into these regions; and that these attempts have been almost uniformly opposed by the friends of the Establishment. In some instances, these attempts have partially succeeded; in others, they have met with no success at all, on account of the determined opposition that has been made to them by

\* The late Rev. Andrew Thomson, D. D.

the very persons who are now raising the cry of destitution. We appeal to the christian world, if it be fair and honourable conduct, first to oppose, by every possible means, the well-intentioned efforts of dissenters to send the gospel to the destitute districts of the Highlands; and then, after having succeeded in their opposition, to turn round upon the very men whose exertions they have thus thwarted, and ask them, with a sneer, "Why have you not gone and preached the gospel in these destitute districts?" Such conduct may be compared to that of an individual, who, when the inmates of a dwelling are perishing for want of food, places himself in the threshold, to prevent any one from making the attempt to relieve the famishing inhabitants; and who, after having succeeded in keeping the benevolent at a distance, raises a loud outcry against them for not having made any effort to bring food to the miserable beings within.

Professor Lawson, after having presided over the Theological Seminary of the Associate Synod for a period of thirty-three years, with great honour to himself, and great advantage to the religious community with which he was connected, died in the month of February 1820. He was a man of extensive learning, of eminent piety, and of child-like simplicity of manners. His attainments in biblical literature were of the highest order. So thorough and accurate was his knowledge of the Scriptures, that he could with ease quote from memory, and explain extempore, almost any portion of the sacred volume, not only in the English version, but in the original languages. It has been affirmed of him, that, if all the existing copies of the Bible had been destroyed, by some calamitous event, he could have restored, from recollection, both the Hebrew and the Greek text almost entire. "Take him all in all," he has had few equals in any church. His latter end was every way corresponding with the holy and exemplary life which he had lived. A short while before he expired, he took the members of his family severally by the hand, pronounced

(like Jacob of old) a blessing upon each, and bade them an affectionate farewell. He then lifted up both his hands, and, looking around him on the company that was assembled in his chamber, he said with a tremulous voice, "The Lord my God bless you all!" The last words he was heard to utter were, "Lord, take me to paradise," when he fell asleep in Jesus.\*

When the Synod received intelligence of his death, at their first meeting after that event had taken place, they agreed to enter upon their record the following memorial of his excellencies as an individual, and of the eminent services which he had rendered to the church, as their Theological Professor:—"The Synod feel themselves called upon to express in their minutes the peculiar and important obligations which they and the people of their charge are under to the Head of the church, for the prolonged and important services performed by this worthy and venerable member of their body, as their Professor of Divinity, to whom, under God, most of the ministers are much indebted for their knowledge of the gospel of the blessed God, and their qualifications for preaching it to their fellow-men, and the impression of whose amiable and venerable character for piety, knowledge of the word of God, sacred erudition, and every excellence that can adorn the man, the christian, and the professor of divinity, they ever wish to retain and cherish, as an excitement to the faithful discharge of the duties of their office."

As arrangements were now making for effecting a union between the Burgher and Anti-burgher sections of the Secession Church, a proposal was made, that the Synod should delay choosing a successor to Dr Lawson, in the Professorship, until the union was accomplished, when the election would be made by the United Synod. This proposal was over-ruled. It was considered inexpedient to delay filling up this important situation. A committee was appointed

\* The reader will find an interesting account of the life of this excellent man, in the *Christian Repository* for 1820.



to prepare and present to the Synod a list of persons, who might be qualified to take the charge of the Theological Seminary. From the list which the committee presented, the Rev. Dr Dick, one of the ministers of Glasgow, was elected Professor of Divinity, on the 27th of April, 1820, by a large majority of the suffrages of his brethren.

At this meeting, a communication was received from the sister Synod in Ireland, stating that they were adopting active measures for diffusing the knowledge of the gospel in the destitute parts of the south and west of their native island; and craving that their brethren in Scotland would give them assistance in this work, by preparing their congregations to receive a deputation, who had been appointed to come over to this country, and collect funds for carrying on their missionary enterprise. The Synod returned a friendly answer to this communication. They expressed their warmest approbation of the exertions which the Irish brethren were making for conveying the light of divine truth into the dark districts of their own isle; they agreed to recommend to the congregations under their charge, the object which these brethren had in view; and they appointed a committee to correspond with the Irish deputation, and to make such arrangements as might enable them successfully to accomplish the object of their mission, when they should arrive in this country.

The Associate Synod signalized the close of their history, as a separate religious society, by agreeing to present a loyal address to his Majesty, George IV., on his accession to the throne. This was one of the last public acts which they performed, previous to their being re-united in church fellowship with their Anti-burgher brethren. The address which was presented to the throne, on this occasion, breathed the same spirit of devoted attachment to the reigning family, and to the civil institutions of the country, as had characterized the Secession during the past years of its existence.

The next meeting of the Synod was appointed to be held on the 5th of September, 1820, when it was determined that it

should cease to exist as a distinct ecclesiastical judicatory. That meeting will long be a memorable one in the annals of the christian church. It constituted an important epoch in the religious history of our country. Then was exhibited to the world the noble and the rare spectacle of two religious and widely-ramified societies, that had been long separated from one another, being re-united on a solid Scriptural basis, without the slightest compromise of principle on the part of either.

## CHAPTER X.

Union of Secession Church. Preparatory causes. First movement. Mid-Calder committee. Statement published by committee. Meeting at Buckhaven. Resolutions adopted. And published. Numerous meetings of sessions and congregations. Agree to petition for union. Eighty-eight petitions presented to Associate Synod. Union committee appointed by Associate Synod. Letter of moderator to General Associate Synod. Letter received with joy. Seventy-four petitions presented to General Associate Synod. Union committee appointed by General Associate Synod. Letter of moderator in reply to Associate Synod. Meeting of the united committee. High importance of their work. Their peculiar qualifications for it. Basis of union prepared by sub-committee. Fully discussed. Unanimously adopted by committee. Presented to the two Synods. Reviewed and corrected. Adopted by the Synods. Associate Synod unanimous. Several ministers dissent from adopting Basis in General Associate Synod. Articles of Basis. Interchange of deputations between the two Synods. Engage in devotional services with each other. Great interest excited by the proposed union. Meeting of the two Synods. Re-union accomplished. Interesting scenes. Remarks on the union.

HAVING now completed the account, which I proposed giving, of the two great branches of the Secession Church, during the long period of their separation, I shall conclude this part of the narrative, by detailing the particulars of an event, to which the history of the church, in modern times, furnishes no parallel, viz. their re-union.

For a considerable number of years previous to this event taking place, a spirit of brotherly kindness, and a feeling of mutual regard, had been gradually gaining ground among



the ministers and people belonging to both Synods. The lapse of time had blunted the keen edge of partisanship, and caused the original points of difference to appear greatly diminished in magnitude. By mingling daily in the common intercourse of life, and by being occasionally guilty of the venial transgression of hearing the ministers of the opposite party preach, at sacramental and other seasons, the people began to find, that there was no essential difference between the doctrine taught by the one party, and that which was inculcated by the other; and that, in matters of practical godliness and of ecclesiastical discipline, they were substantially agreed. A desire was cherished, in several quarters, that a union should take place, long before it was actually accomplished; and the preceding pages record the fact, that petitions to this effect were presented to the supreme courts, on both sides of the Secession.

But what tended more, probably, than any other cause, to bring about this desirable event, was the missionary, and Bible, and other religious societies, that sprung up over the whole country, and drew good men of all denominations together, as toward a common centre. Burgher and Anti-burgher mingled here in the same committee, met on the same platform, engaged in the same religious exercises, felt their bosoms glow with the same sacred flame, and laboured to promote the same hallowed cause. By frequent meetings in these local associations, and by being cordially united in the same benevolent work, those kindly feelings, which they had begun previously to cherish, were greatly strengthened; and any remains of prejudice that might be still lurking in their bosom, gradually disappeared, under the influence of christian love, like the frosts of winter melted under the genial influence of the spring. The whole mass became thus insensibly leavened with a spirit that was exceedingly favourable to a complete amalgamation: and when the proposal for a union was first made, it touched upon a chord that vibrated from the one extremity of the community to the other. Instead of being coldly received, and sullenly thrust

aside, as a subject not yet ripe for discussion, it operated like a spark of fire cast into a heap of combustible materials. The flame of christian affection, which had for some time been glowing within, immediately burst forth. It spread with rapidity from town to town, and from hamlet to hamlet. The cry for union became all but universal ; and the chief difficulty with those whose business it was to deliberate and determine concerning such an important measure, was not to urge on the movement, but to restrain the impetuosity of it, lest, in the eagerness of the parties to become one, they should neglect or overlook those prudential arrangements, which were necessary to secure both the completeness and the permanence of the union.

The honour of having originated this truly christian movement, belongs, so far as I can learn, to persons connected with the Secession congregations of Mid-Calder and East-Calder. A reading society had been instituted at the former of these places, consisting of members belonging to the two congregations, who were thus brought frequently together, and, among other topics of conversation, discoursed on the subject of union. Those who took the lead in this business, were, Mr William Mathewson, one of the Mid-Calder elders, and Mr Robert M'Gregor, a member of East-Calder congregation. Professor Duncan, in a communication addressed to the writer of this narrative, says:—" Mr Mathewson frequently talked to me on the subject, and wished some active measures to be taken. But having a considerable development of the bump of caution, I was afraid of raising a *muir-burn* that might not be easily quenched. They were determined, however, to sound the public mind ; and the two above-named got a meeting with others, where it was agreed to invite correspondence. They came and informed me of this ; and, at their request, cordially approving of the measure, I drew up the invitation, to be published in the *Christian Magazine and Repository*, and framed other papers, in the prosecution of the labours of the Mid-Calder committee."

The “sounding of the public mind” was made by means of the following statement, published in the two religious periodicals now mentioned:—“*Mid-Calder*, 20th August, 1818. A meeting took place here, this evening, of a considerable number of the two congregations, commonly denominated Burgher and Anti-burgher, for the purpose of considering the practicability and advantage of a general union of the various denominations of dissenters throughout Britain, primarily of all evangelical presbyterians; when it was unanimously agreed, that, as such an union is highly desirable, so the present seems to be a favourable season for attempting it. The following persons,—Samuel Neal, William Mathewson, Robert Dick, Robert Law, A. Somerville, Robert M'Gregor, James Carlaw, G. Hastie,—were therefore chosen as a committee, and requested to draw out, and send to the editors of the *Christian Magazine and Repository*, for insertion, an intimation of their desire to correspond through those publications, and co-operate with all congregations who may have a similar inclination.

“Their present intention is, and they conceive it may be necessary for every congregation, to send to their ecclesiastical courts a petition, stating their desire that the subject be taken into their consideration. Of the propriety of this, and other steps for obtaining the object in view, this committee look for suggestions from those congregations which are more numerous, and better able to direct to suitable means. From the liberal sentiments and friendly intercourse of christians of the present day, and with America and Ireland full in view, there is much reason to hope for a favourable issue to endeavours so obviously conducive to the general interests of religion.” \*

The effect which this invitation produced among the members of that religious community for whom it was specially intended, showed that the originators of it had not miscalculated the state of public feeling in the Secession Church. No sooner was it circulated in the different districts of the

\* *Christian Repository*. P. 518.



country, by means of the periodicals in which it was inserted, than a general and eager movement took place among the people belonging both to the Burgher and Antiburgher branches of the Secession. Meetings of sessions and of congregations were held in every part of the country, to consider the practicability and expediency of a union, and to adopt measures with a view to the accomplishment of this desirable object. The first meeting of this kind, that took place after the appearance of the Mid-Calder manifesto, was held at Buckhaven, and consisted of persons belonging to the two congregations of Buckhaven and Dubbieside. As a specimen of the harmonious and agreeable manner, in which these meetings were usually conducted, and of the excellent sentiments which animated the mass of the people, I shall here insert the account, which was published, of the proceedings of this meeting.

“ *Buckhaven Meeting-house, October 8, 1818.*—At a meeting (which was opened with prayer, by the Rev. David Telford), of the associate congregations of Buckhaven and Dubbieside, usually denominated Burgher and Antiburgher, held here this evening, in consequence of an intimation from the pulpits of both places of worship, on the preceding Sabbath, to consider the practicability and advantages which might be derived from a union of presbyterians, of all denominations in this country, in church fellowship, who are in a state of secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland; to express their approbation of the meeting at Mid-Calder, on the 20th of August; and to co-operate with their brethren in that place, and other congregations in the Secession interest, who are desirous of imitating the laudable example lately exhibited in America and Ireland,—Mr William Thomson was called to the chair. After the attention of both congregations was directed to the important object in view, the following persons were chosen as a committee : Messrs Lawrence Arnot, Walter Kennedy, William Coupar, John Kennedy, James Robbie, Andrew Thomson, John Landale, James Aitken, William Deas, Thomas Morgan,

John Patrick, and Alexander Drybrough (four to be a quorum), to meet in Dubbieside Meeting-house, on Thursday next week, at seven o'clock in the evening, with powers to adjourn, and to call a general meeting of both congregations, when it is judged necessary. It was moved and seconded, that the members of both congregations present should, by lifting up their right hand, testify their good will to the union proposed, when it appeared, by a great show of hands in every part of the house, that they were well affected towards the truly desirable object, so much calculated for promoting the interests of religion. It was also agreed that, in order to give publicity to this meeting, the editors of the Christian Magazine, and Christian Repository, be requested to insert it in their useful periodical publications. Concluded with prayer.

“ WILLIAM THOMSON, *Preses.*”,

The committee now named met at the time and place appointed, and prepared the following resolutions, which were also published :—

“ 1. That a general union of all presbyterian dissenters throughout Britain, holding evangelical principles and sentiments, appears to us not only to be truly desirable, but also practicable.

“ 2. That this union may be permanent, it must be founded on principles which seem to be not only unexceptionable, but honourable to all concerned.

“ 3. That a correspondence be opened with us, and other congregations who may be actuated by a strong desire to have this important object accomplished.

“ 4. That it be recommended to all congregations of similar views with ourselves, that they hold meetings for obtaining an object so highly desirable in itself, and so much calculated for the welfare of the Secession Church.

“ 5. That it is judged expedient to request our respective ecclesiastical courts to take this subject immediately into consideration.

“ 6. That it be recommended to all the sessions of the Secession Church, to do what they can to forward this object, so highly favourable for promoting the general interests of religion.” \*

The result of the movement produced by the publication of the above, and similar documents, was, that when the Associate and the General Associate Synods held their spring meeting in 1819, the tables of both of these ecclesiastical judicatories were literally covered with petitions from the congregations under their inspection, all of them uttering the same prayer, that measures might be immediately adopted with a view to effect a union between the two Synods.

The number of petitions laid on the table of the Associate Synod, at this meeting, amounted to eighty-one; and, at a subsequent meeting, there were seven additional presented, making in all eighty-eight.

On the 29th of April, the Associate Synod took the subject of these petitions under consideration. After hearing a few of the petitions read, they were unanimous in expressing the happiness which they felt on account of the ardent desire of union which animated the two great branches of the Secession; and they resolved that they would do every thing that was competent to them as a court, to give effect to the desire which was thus so generally expressed. They appointed a numerous committee to meet with those brethren, whom it was expected the General Associate Synod would appoint to correspond with them, in order to form a basis of union. This committee consisted of the following persons: Drs James Hall, James Peddie, James Husband, John Dick, Hugh Jamieson,—Messrs Andrew Lothian, Thomas Aitchieson, Thomas Brown, James Hay, James Law, John Jamieson, William Kidston, John Brown senior, John Brown junior, Patrick Comrie, and David Greig, ministers; with Messrs John Brown, Andrew Grierson, John Scott, Robert Walker, and James Waddel, elders.

The Synod, impressed with the great importance of the

\* Christian Repository, pp. 693, 694.



business in which they were engaged, offered up solemn prayer to God, giving thanks to him for the “present promising appearances,” and imploring his direction and influence for bringing this matter to a successful issue : after which they united in singing the 122d Psalm. They then appointed their moderator to write a letter to the moderator of the other Synod, to be communicated to his brethren, informing them of what the Associate Synod had done. This letter was to the following effect :—

“ *Edinburgh, April 30, 1819.*

“ REVEREND SIR,—By appointment of the Associate Synod, I have the honour to inform you, that the Synod, at their meeting yesterday, having received upwards of eighty petitions from different congregations, praying that measures may be taken for effecting a union between the two great bodies of the Secession Church, unanimously resolved to do every thing in their power for attaining that most desirable object ; and, after prayer and thanksgiving to God, appointed a committee of sixteen ministers and five elders, to converse with any committee that may be appointed with the same view, by the General Associate Synod, at their approaching meeting, in order to form the basis of a union between the two Synods ; authorising the said committee to appoint a sub-committee, and nominating the Rev. Dr James Hall, of Rose Street, Edinburgh, their convener, with whom the convener of any committee, appointed for the same purpose by the General Associate Synod, may correspond.

“ Allow me, Sir, as an individual, to express my heart-felt joy, that a measure so congenial with the spirit of the gospel, and so much calculated to advance the cause of our dear Redeemer, has been brought forward ; and my most cordial wishes that the result may be such as to meet the desires and expectations of so many thousands of God’s people.

“ That the Holy Spirit may rest on you, and your brethren, and on all the congregations under your care, is the earnest prayer of, Reverend Sir, your brother in Christ Jesus.

“ *GEORGE YOUNG, Moderator.*”

“ To the Reverend the Moderator of  
the General Associate Synod to  
meet at Edinburgh, in May 1819.”

This letter was read in the General Associate Synod, on the 11th of May, and was heard “ with respectful attention,

and the deepest interest." On the following day, seventy-four petitions were laid upon the Synod's table, all of them praying for measures to be adopted, with a view to effect a union. After several of these petitions were read, and commissioners heard in their support, the Synod engaged in praise and prayer. Mr James Hay of Alyth, one of the oldest members of the Synod, conducted these devotional exercises. He commenced by giving out the 126th Psalm, after which he prayed, and then concluded the exercise, by giving out a portion of the 102d Psalm. On the 13th, the Synod delivered their sentiments on the subject of the union. Part of this day also was spent by them in praise and prayer. The 122d Psalm was sung, and Mr Alexander Pringle of Perth prayed. After long and harmonious deliberation, the court were unanimous in agreeing to appoint a committee of an equal number with that which had been appointed by the Associate Synod to co-operate with them in forming a basis of union. This committee consisted of the following persons:—Drs John Jamieson, John Mitchell, David Black, —Messrs Alexander Pringle, William Ferrier, James Muckersie, George Paxton, Robert Culbertson, James Stark, Robert Muter, Hugh Heugh, James Hay, Alexander Duncan, Robert Morison, James Simpson, and George Stevenson, ministers,—with Messrs Andrew Mitchell, William Ellis, William Carswell, David Wallace, and David Grieve, elders.

The result of the General Associate Synod's deliberations on this important business, was communicated to the moderator of the Associate Synod, in the following letter:—

*" Stirling, 20th May, 1819.*

" REVEREND SIR,—I had the honour of receiving your most gratifying communication, of the 30th April last, announcing the measures adopted by the Associate Synod, in consequence of numerous petitions from the congregations under their inspection, for effecting a union of the two great bodies of the Secession Church; and, having read your letter to the General Associate Synod, at their meeting last week, I was directed to inform you, that it was heard with the deepest and

most respectful interest, and ordered to be preserved in the records of the court.

“ The Synod having received upwards of ninety petitions from different congregations,\* all breathing the warmest desires for union, and having at great length, and various sittings, and after repeatedly joining in prayer and thanksgiving to God, considered this most important subject, unanimously agreed in appointing a committee of sixteen ministers, and five elders, to act in concert with the committee of the same number, appointed by the Associate Synod, in preparing the basis of a union of the two bodies, empowering their committee to appoint a sub-committee, and nominating the Rev. Robert Culbertson, of Leith, their convener, who will correspond with the convener of the committee appointed by the Associate Synod.

“ With those ardent and pious feelings in relation to this extraordinary and extensive disposition to union, with which, as an individual, you close your communication, permit me, in the same character, to say, that I desire most cordially to coincide, and to express my earnest wishes, and my sanguine hopes, that this great and simultaneous impulse, which so many christians in our native land have received in favour of visible fellowship among the friends of evangelical truth and order, may, under the guidance of the Spirit of our common Lord, be speedily consummated to his glory, and the enlargement and joy of his church.

“ With my most affectionate regard for yourself, as a brother in Christ, and a fellow-servant in the gospel, and for the interest of religion in the association of which you are a member, I remain, yours, &c.

“ HUGH HEUGH, *Moderator.*”

“ To the Rev. George Young, moderator  
of the Associate Synod.”

The united committee met at Edinburgh, on the 17th of June. All the members, with the exception of Mr Greig, were present. Dr Husband presided as chairman, and Dr Black officiated as clerk. A letter was presented to the meeting, from a committee of the Original Burgher (Old Light) Synod, stating that a committee had been appointed by said Synod, “ to collect information, and to correspond with all the bodies of the Secession that are using means to accomplish the proposed union.” After some deliberation,

\* No more than seventy-four congregations are mentioned in the Synod record as having presented petitions.



the united committee agreed that an answer should be returned to this communication, to the following effect:—  
“ That, being appointed for the purpose of effecting a union betwixt the Associate Synod and the General Associate Synod, they would exceed their powers were they at present to admit a committee from any other body or party to the discussion.”

Before entering upon the consideration of the business which had brought them together, they agreed to spend some time in praise and prayer. A portion of the 102d Psalm was sung, and Mr Alexander Pringle prayed. A long and friendly conference ensued. It was, in some respects, both a difficult and a delicate task which they were required to perform. To break the first ground, in such a discussion, must have been felt by all the members, to be a matter involving in it great responsibility, because the opening speeches were likely to give a peculiar direction or tone to the whole of the ensuing proceedings. On the one hand, it was necessary that there should be, on the part of the speakers, perfect openness and frankness in the statement of their sentiments; and, on the other, it was no less necessary to avoid making such allusion to past controversies as was fitted to awaken in the bosom feelings which had now, for a considerable period, been permitted to slumber. Never was there an occasion when men were assembled to deliberate on any question, where the successful issue of the deliberations depended more on a happy combination of honesty and candour, with caution and kindness. I may add, that both Synods were well directed in the choice of their respective committees; for, when they were assembled together, in one deliberative society, there was diffused among them a large portion of high intellectual talent, sterling honesty of purpose, enlightened christian principle, generous warmth of affection, and profound acquaintance with the constitution of the christian church, and with the various forms of ecclesiastical polity. The project of a union, which they were met to discuss, could not have been placed in better hands.

Dr Hall led the way in the discussion. He was followed by Mr Pringle. Then the other members delivered their sentiments. There were few, if any present, who did not state their opinion. There prevailed among all the speakers the greatest cordiality and frankness. The views of each were freely propounded, and freely discussed. On almost all the doctrinal and practical points that passed under review, there existed a great cordiality of feeling, and harmony of opinion. After a friendly and most confidential discussion, which lasted for several hours, a sub-committee was appointed to embody the views which had been expressed, in an overture, which they were to present to the meeting, at their next sederunt. In the mean time, a short adjournment took place.

When the brethren met in the evening, the sub-committee laid before them the articles, which were designed to serve as the ground-work of a basis of union. These articles were fully and freely discussed at several meetings; and, after undergoing a careful revision, they were unanimously adopted by the committee, without a single dissent being recorded.

On the 8th of September, the Basis of Union was laid on the table of the Associate Synod, by their committee. The Synod were much gratified with the result of their committee's labours. They appointed their moderator to return thanks to them for the important services which they had performed; and they were peculiarly gratified to learn, that "the utmost cordiality and candour, and an amicable conciliating spirit had been manifested on the part of the members of the committee, from the General Associate Synod." Impressed with the importance of the work in which they were about to engage, they considered it necessary, before entering on the discussion of the principles of the Basis, to spend some time in praise and prayer. A few verses of the 60th Psalm (at the beginning), were sung, and Mr Greig offered up solemn prayer, expressing in fervent language the thanksgivings of the Synod, and imploring the divine direction in their future deliberations. The impression produced

by these religious exercises, in which a large auditory joined, was so deep and powerful, that the Synod judged it not unnecessary to mention in their record, "that these devotional exercises seemed to be attended with an uncommon degree of religious feeling and animation."

The Synod then reviewed, one by one, the articles of the Basis; and, with the exception of a qualifying clause, inserted in one of them, they were severally adopted in the exact form and language, in which they had been presented by the committee. At the close of their deliberations, which were characterized by a most remarkable harmony, they again united in praise and thanksgiving to God. Dr Waugh of London conducted the devotions of the grateful assembly. A deputation of ministers and elders was appointed by them, to repair to the General Associate Synod, who were sitting at the same time in Edinburgh, to intimate to them, that the Basis of Union had received the sanction of the Associate Synod.

Several sederunts were spent by the General Associate Synod, in reviewing the articles of the Basis; and, after having completed their review, they considered it proper to delay, till a future meeting, giving their final sanction to them. The following was the motion which the Synod adopted at the close of their deliberations:—"The Synod having considered the articles of Basis proposed by the joint committee, so far agreed to them as a Basis of Union, as to transmit them to the several presbyteries, to be under their consideration till next meeting of Synod." They then appointed a deputation of ministers and elders to repair to the Associate Synod, and to inform them of the resolution which they had adopted.

The meeting of this deputation with the Associate Synod, was a very interesting one. Dr John Jamieson of Edinburgh, addressed the Synod in name of the brethren who accompanied him, and stated that the General Associate Synod, whom they represented, had so far approved of the articles of the Basis of Union, as to send them down to pres-



byteries, to be under their consideration till their next meeting. The Associate Synod received with joy this communication; and, strongly impressed with the gracious agency of God, in conducting to its present issue the important business in which both Synods were engaged, requested the members of the deputation to unite with them in the exercises of praise and prayer. With this request the brethren cheerfully complied. Dr Alexander Pringle of Perth, a member of the General Synod, commenced the devotional services, by giving out a few verses at the beginning of the 85th Psalm, which were sung by the assembly. He then offered up fervent supplication to God, in behalf of the two Synods, and the congregations connected with them, and for the divine blessing to rest on the endeavours which they were making to unite the two branches of the Secession into one; after which the 2d and 3d verses of the 98th Psalm were sung. Dr Pringle then requested, that a member of the Associate Synod might also be employed in offering up prayer, to render the communion of the two bodies more complete, when Mr John Brown of Whitburn was called upon to engage in this exercise, which he did with great fervour and simplicity. These solemn exercises were concluded by the worshipping assembly singing a portion of the 102d Psalm. During the whole of these services, a spirit of devotion appeared to be poured out, in a remarkable manner, upon both ministers and people. Many of the audience were melted into tears. It was indeed a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

At the next meeting of the General Associate Synod, in spring 1820, the articles of union were again discussed *seriatim*. Several alterations were proposed and adopted. These alterations consisted chiefly in the introduction of words and clauses, for the purpose either of rendering the meaning more definite, where it might be somewhat vague, or of qualifying statements that might be too strongly expressed. In those cases where new propositions were suggested and adopted, no change was produced by them in the general principles

on which the Basis of Union was formed. These remained untouched. During the course of these discussions, several dissents were recorded, and leave was occasionally asked that "the door might be left open" for future "exoneration."

On the 25th of April, all the articles of the Basis, after being reviewed and corrected, were finally sanctioned by the General Associate Synod, and a deputation was appointed to give intimation to the Associate Synod, that the Basis of Union had been accepted, and to request their acquiescence in the alterations that had been made. These alterations being considered by the Associate Synod, were approved of. One of the alterations required that the words "*only form*," be inserted in the article respecting the presbyterian form of church government. Three ministers craved to have it marked, that they dissented from the adopting of these words; and they stated that their object in wishing to have their dissent recorded was, that they might not be thought inconsistent, should they plead for a modification of this article, when it should be incorporated in the Formula. Another minister dissented from the article on the subject of public covenanting. With these exceptions, the alterations were unanimously adopted.

The following is the Basis of Union, as adopted by both Synods, in its corrected state:—

"Without interfering with the right of private judgment respecting the grounds of separation, both parties shall carefully abstain from agitating, in future, the questions which occasioned it; and, with regard to the burgess-oath, both Synods agree to use what may appear to them the most proper means for obtaining the abolition of that religious clause, which occasioned the religious strife, in those towns where it may still exist.

"Art. I. We hold the Word of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the only rule of faith and manners.

"Art. II. We retain the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as the con-

fession of our faith, expressive of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures,—it being always understood, however, that we do not approve or require an approbation of any thing in those books, or in any other, which teaches, or may be thought to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles of religion.

“NOTE.—In elucidation of this article respecting passages in our standard-books, and in the deeds of our church, which imply, or have been interpreted to imply, that the magistrate may use coercive measures in matters of religious profession ; we remark, that, while we grant the magistrate’s right to restrain and punish whatever, under pretence even of religion, violates the order of civil society, we disapprove of compulsion in things religious, and of all persecution for conscience sake. And we farther state, that, though we do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate’s power about ecclesiastical affairs, we adhere to the doctrines formerly stated by the Associate Presbytery, in 1743, viz. That the public good of outward and common order, in all reasonable society, unto the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose, in a sole respect unto that office ; and as, in prosecuting this end civilly, according to their office, it is only over men’s good and evil works that they can have any inspection, so it is only over those which they must needs take cognizance for the said public good ; while, at the same time, their doing so must be in such a manner, and proceed so far allenarly, as is requisite for that end, without assuming any lordship immediately over men’s consciences, or making any encroachment upon the special privileges and business of the church.

“And we take this opportunity of avowing our adherence to the presbytery’s doctrine, viz. ‘ That we ought to acknowledge the present civil government of these nations, and subjection thereto in lawful commands.’

“Art. III. The Presbyterian form of church government, without any superiority of office to that of a teaching presbyter, and in a due subordination of church judicatories, being the only form of government which we acknowledge, as founded upon, and agreeable to, the word of God, shall be the government of the United Church ; and the Directory, as heretofore, shall be retained as a compilation of excellent rules.

“Art. IV. We consider as valid those reasons of Secession from the prevailing party in the judicatories of the Established Church, which are stated in the Testimony that was



approved of, and published by, the Associate Presbytery; particularly the sufferance of error without adequate censure; the settling of ministers by patronage, even in reclaiming congregations; the neglect or relaxation of discipline; the restraint of ministerial freedom in testifying against mal-administration; the refusal of that party to be reclaimed. And we find the grounds of Secession from the judicatories of the Established Church in some respects increased, instead of being diminished.

“ Art. V. We cherish an unfeigned veneration for our reforming ancestors, and a deep sense of the inestimable value of the benefits which accrue to us, from their noble and successful efforts in the cause of civil and religious liberty. We approve of the method adopted by them for mutual excitement and encouragement, by solemn confederation and vows to God. We acknowledge that we are under high obligations to maintain and prosecute the work of reformation begun, and to a great extent carried on by them; and we assert, that public religious vowing or covenanting, is a moral duty, to be practised when the circumstances of Providence require it; but as the duty, from its nature, is occasional, not stated, and as there is, and may be, a diversity of sentiment respecting the seasonableness of it, we agree that, while no obstruction shall be thrown in the way, but every scriptural facility shall be afforded to those who have clearness to proceed in it, yet its observance shall not be required of any, in order to church communion.

“ Art. VI. A Formula shall be made up from the Formulas already existing, suited to the United Secession Church.

“ NOTE.—That it be recommended to the United Synod, to prepare, as soon as possible, a more detailed view of the above articles, as the Testimony of the United Church, containing the substance of the Judicial Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, and the Answers to Nairn’s Reasons of Dissent.”

When the deputation above referred to, appeared in the Associate Synod, and announced the acceptance of the articles of union by the General Associate Synod, with the al-

terations that had been made, they were requested by their brethren to unite with them in praise and supplication. With this request they cheerfully complied. After a portion of the 103d Psalm had been sung, Dr Mitchell, a member of the deputation, offered up prayer to God; and the solemn service was concluded by the audience singing the 133d Psalm.

All the preliminaries of the union being now settled, the Associate Synod unanimously agreed to declare, "that, as the two Synods are now fully united in principle, there cannot exist any cause to prevent the exercise of ministerial and christian communion:" and they sent a deputation to their brethren of the other Synod, "to give them assurance that this Synod rejoices because the happy period has now arrived, when the two great bodies of the Secession Church may hold ministerial and christian communion with one another." This message produced a feeling of joy in the General Associate Synod; and the deputation were requested to engage, along with the Synod, in the exercises of praise and thanksgiving. Both Synods re-appointed their respective committees to meet with each other, during the summer, and to make such arrangements as might be necessary for the full completion of the union in the month of September.

Mention has been made, that during the progress of the discussions on the Basis of Union, in the General Associate Synod, several dissents were recorded; and leave was asked that "the door might be left open for future exoneration." There was a small portion of the members of that Synod, who did not acquiesce in the articles of union, and who dissented from the decision of their brethren, adopting these articles. At the close of the proceedings, when the Synod appointed a deputation to intimate to their brethren of the Associate Synod, that they had reviewed, and agreed to, all the articles in the Basis of Union, a formal protestation was made against this deed. In this protestation, Mr George Stevenson, minister at Ayr, took the lead. The following

paper, presented by him to the Synod (and which was recorded in their minutes), will show what were the reasons which influenced him, and the brethren who acted along with him, in opposing the deed of Synod, adopting the Basis of Union :—

“ I, George Stevenson, minister of the gospel at Ayr, do solemnly protest against this deed of Synod, respecting the Basis of Union, in its present form, and against proceeding to union with our brethren of the Associate Synod, upon said Basis, for the following, among other reasons, to be given in to this Synod, more in detail, at a subsequent meeting, if found necessary. *First*, because, according to said Basis, our relation to, and connexion with, the covenanting Church of Scotland are not recognized as in the former constitutional documents of the Secession Church. *Secondly*, because it is understood that the Narrative and Testimony, from the moment of union, ceases to be of public authority as a standard-book among us ; while, at the same time, we have no Testimony substituted in its room, recognizing the attainments of our reforming ancestors, and condemning the several steps of defection from these attainments, both in present and former times. *Thirdly*, because no suitable provision is made by this Basis for guarding the union church against what is called free communion ; and because the purity of her fellowship is not protected by a pointed Testimony against several sinful and ensnaring oaths, and against those fashionable amusements, so inconsistent with christian sobriety, which were formerly condemned by this church. *Fourthly*, as it lays an insuperable bar in the way of proceeding in the duty of public religious covenanting, as heretofore, since we are not warranted to expect a bond for that purpose, authorized by the supreme court of the union church. *Lastly*, because sufficient time has not been given, nor means employed, for informing the church diffusive of the important change about to take place in their public profession, so as to enable them to act with judgment in a matter in which their consciences are so deeply interested :



And I do protest, that I shall be at liberty, notwithstanding this vote, or the proceedings arising out of it, on all proper occasions, in the discharge of all my official duties, to maintain and propagate the principles of the Secession Church, as laid down in her Testimonies, and recognized in my ordination vows; on all which I take instruments, and crave extracts."

"GEORGE STEVENSON."

"*Edinburgh, 28th April, 1820.*"

To this protestation was appended the following note, with the names of the undersigned members:—

"We, subscribers, having engaged in the same protestation, do hereby adhere to the above reasons, and claim the same privileges.

"GEORGE PAXTON, minister.

"RICHARD BLACK, minister, Perth.

"ROBERT SMITH, minister, Kilwinning.

"JAMES GRAY, minister, Brechin.

"THOMAS GRAY, minister, Kirkaldy.

"JAMES AIRD, minister, Rattray.

"PETER M'DERMAID, minister.

"WILLIAM M'EWAN, minister, Howgate."

There were a few of the brethren, besides those whose names are here mentioned, who dissented from some of the articles of union, though they did not consider it their duty to carry their opposition farther; and two of the ministers, whose names are appended to this protest (Messrs James Aird and William M'Ewan), afterwards acquiesced in the union.

During the summer of 1820, much brotherly intercourse was carried on between the ministers and people belonging to the two Synods. The ministers preached in one another's pulpits, and the people flocked to the sacramental occasions; so that the crowds which assembled at the *tent-preachings*, which were then common over the whole country, were larger than they had been at almost any former period. All

were delighted that the middle wall of partition had been broken down between the two large bodies of the Secession, and that they would soon be re-united into one religious community. Many churchmen took a deep interest in this approaching consummation. They regarded the religious movement which was taking place throughout the Secession, as the harbinger of a more extensive union among the various sections of the church of Christ. A desire was manifested, in several quarters, to remove any obstacles that might obstruct the progress of the union. In some instances, the town councils of burghs abolished the religious clause of the oath, which had occasioned the disunion ; \* and the Convention of Royal Burghs, with a liberality of spirit which did them honour, unanimously recommended, without any solicitation on the part of the Seceders, its entire abolition, for the express purpose of facilitating the consummation of this desirable event.

On the 5th of September, the Associate and the General Associate Synods assembled at Edinburgh, The former held their meeting in Portsburgh Church, and the latter in their Synod-house, in Nicolson Street. There was a numerous attendance of members in both Synods. There were enrolled as present, in the Associate Synod, 106 ministers, and 62 elders ; and, in the General Associate, there were enrolled 76 ministers, and 36 elders † Two days were spent by each Synod in determining such causes, as it was proper for them to decide in their separate ecclesiastical capacity ; and all the necessary arrangements being completed, it was resolved, that the union should take place formally on Friday, the 8th of September. The magistrates of Portsburgh politely offered to accompany, in their official robes, the Associate Synod to the place of union, but the offer was respectfully declined. Bristo Street Church being the spot where the separation had taken place seventy-three years

\* This was the case in Glasgow and Paisley.

† The number of ministers connected with the Associate Synod, at the period of the re-union, was 139 ; and the number belonging to the General Associate, was 123 ; making a total of 262.

before this, was appropriately selected as the scene of this noble exhibition of the power of christian love. Here the two Synods resolved to drop for ever their distinctive badges, and to become one in profession, as they were already one in sentiment.

On the day appointed, at half past twelve o'clock, the members of these ecclesiastical judicatories walked in regular procession, from the above mentioned places of meeting to Bristo Street Church. First in order were the ministers, then the elders, next the probationers, and after these moved the students of divinity. A portion of the church was railed in, for the reception of the two Synods ; the members of which were seated in alternate pews, so that they might be completely intermingled. The two moderators were seated in front of the pulpit, with the two clerks at a little distance on the right and left. The church was crowded in every part by an immense assemblage, anxious to witness the solemn proceedings of such an eventful meeting.

After all were properly seated, the Rev. Dr Jamieson of Edinburgh, the senior moderator (belonging to the General Associate Synod), rose and gave out a portion of the 102d Psalm (17-22 verses), in singing which the ministers and elders, and whole attending multitude joined. After the Psalm was sung, he called upon the clerk of the Synod, whom he represented, to read their last minute. This being done, the Rev. Mr Balmer of Berwick, the junior moderator (belonging to the Associate Synod), rose and called upon the clerk of the Synod with which he was connected, to read their last minute. This minute which was read by each clerk, being prepared with a special view to the union, was expressed in similar terms, and was to the following effect :—

“ The General Associate Synod (or the Associate Synod), having accepted the Basis of Union, and having by the good hand of God upon them now finished all their own business, and all preparatory arrangements, they with fervent gratitude to God, for having led them thus far, and in humble dependence on his grace to bless the solemn and interesting



step which they are now about to take, and enable them to improve the privileges, and discharge the duties which are about to devolve in consequence of it, do resolve, and hereby record their resolution, forthwith to repair to the appointed place, that they may unite with their brethren of the other Synod, to be known by the name of THE UNITED ASSOCIATE SYNOD OF THE SECESSION CHURCH, composed of *the Associate* (commonly called Burgher) *Synod*, and of *the General Associate* (commonly called Antiburgher) *Synod*, that they may henceforth walk with them in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, striving together for the faith of the gospel, for the purity of divine ordinances, and for the enlargement of the church of Christ."

After the reading of this minute by the clerks of the two Synods, all the members rose and stood while the articles of the Basis of Union were read. The senior moderator then said, "I declare in the name of the General Associate Synod, whom I represent, that the General Associate Synod is henceforth one with the Associate Synod." The junior moderator made a similar declaration in name of the Associate Synod whom he represented. After this mutual declaration, the two moderators gave to one another the right hand of fellowship. In this expression of brotherly love they were followed by all the ministers and elders belonging to the two Synods. While they were thus, amid the gaze of a numerous and delighted audience, recognizing each other in silence, as brethren in Christ, and while they were pledging themselves, by the firm grasp and the hearty shake of the hand, to walk together for the future in the fellowship of the gospel, it is impossible to express the feelings which such a scene produced. Tears of joy were shed by not a few. If we may be permitted to suppose that the disembodied spirits of those good men, who were present in Bristo Street Church when the separation took place, contemplated this interesting sight from their abodes of glory, or were made acquainted with it by the instrumentality of angels, it is not drawing too much upon the imagination of the reader to affirm, that

the knowledge of such an event, in whatever way derived, would give increased intensity to their happiness, and would furnish them with a theme of devout and grateful acknowledgment to their exalted Redeemer in heaven.

Mr David Greig, of Lochgelly, being the oldest minister present, was called upon by the United Associate Synod to take the chair as moderator. Mr Greig, having taken the chair, gave out the 133d Psalm, which was sung by the audience; after which, he constituted the court with prayer. Dr Alexander Pringle, of Perth, being next in seniority, as a minister, to Mr Greig, ascended the pulpit, gave out a portion of the 90th Psalm (13-17 verses) and then offered up supplication and thanksgiving to God. He was succeeded by Dr James Hall, of Edinburgh, who read the 17th chapter of John's Gospel, sung the last three verses of the 72d Psalm, and prayed. These solemn and most delightful exercises were concluded by the ministers and assembled multitude singing the beautiful and appropriate lines at the beginning of the 147th Psalm :—

“ Praise ye the Lord; for it is good  
Praise to our God to sing :  
For it is pleasant, and to praise  
It is a comely thing.

“ God doth build up Jerusalem;  
And he it is alone  
That the dispersed of Israel  
Doth gather into one,” &c. &c.

After the devotional exercises were concluded, the roll of the United Synod was called; and committees were appointed to make a new arrangement of the presbyteries, to prepare a list of the probationers, and to make an equitable distribution of their services among the vacant congregations. The Synod, without entering on any other business, then adjourned to meet on Tuesday, the following week.\*

\* It is an interesting fact, worthy of being recorded, that an aged elder, of the name of Andrew Oliphant, belonging to the Rev. Dr Mitchell's congre-

The re-union of these two Synods, after a separation of seventy-three years, whether viewed in itself, or contemplated in reference to its results, must be regarded as a most important event. It has hitherto been a matter of reproach against the christian church, that its repose should have been so often disturbed, and its prosperity marred, by divisions amongst its friends. From this reproach the Secession section of the visible church cannot claim exemption. The preceding pages show, that, in more than one instance, it has had to mourn over the disruption of its communion. But if, in the course of its history, instances occur of angry contention amongst brethren, and of a separation taking place amongst those who had long been united together in the sacred bond of the gospel, it is pleasing to find, in the happy consummation of the event which has now been recorded, such a noble display given of the power of christianity. It bears a close resemblance, both in the causes which led to it, and in the truly christian spirit in which it was consummated, to one of those remarkable pentecostal scenes described in the early annals of the christian church. Among the many great events of a religious kind, which have taken place during the present generation, and which stamp a peculiar aspect on the times in which we live, it will be difficult to find one in which the finger of the great Head of the church has been more visibly displayed, than that which is here recorded. The length of time during which the parties had been in a state of separation, the vast importance which, at one period, was attached to the points at issue, the keenness (not to make use of a stronger term) with which those points were agitated, the feelings of animosity which had been produced, and the spirit of rivalry which had been excited, all these were circumstances which rendered a re-union of the contending parties an event highly

gation, Wellington Street, Glasgow, saw the division of the Associate Synod in 1747, and witnessed its re-union in 1820. The good man rejoiced when this event took place. He was so interested in it that he did not sleep for several nights. He died at the advanced age of ninety-six.



improbable. Yet the movements, which terminated in the full accomplishment of this desirable measure, were so unexpected, so rapid, so general, and at the same time so harmonious, that no pious mind could fail to be impressed with the idea that the Spirit of God was the moving cause. Every reflecting individual who took an interest in these movements, and who witnessed their triumphant progress, and happy results, must have been ready to exclaim, "Truly this is the doing of the Lord."

The way was prepared in a remarkable manner, by the course of events, for the effecting of this union. Obstacles were unexpectedly removed. No compromise of principle was made by either party. The abolition of the obnoxious clause in the burgess-oath, by the town councils, removed all danger of future discussion on this point. So complete was the spirit of union, that pervaded the two bodies, that of the Associate Synod there was not one minister, who did not become a member of the United Synod; and of the General Associate Synod there were only a few, a very few (as we shall afterwards see), who, for reasons satisfactory to themselves, considered it their duty to stand aloof, after the union was accomplished.

On the whole, I cannot but consider this memorable event, taking place at the time it did, as designed, in the providence of God, to give increased energy and influence to the Secession Church; that it might thereby be the better prepared for acting a prominent and decided part in those great religious movements, of which our country is now the theatre, and which bid fair, at no distant period, to give a powerful impulse to the progress of the gospel, both at home and abroad, and thus to effect an extensive amelioration in the moral condition of the nations of the world.



### PART III.

CONTAINING THE HISTORY OF THE SECESSION FROM  
THE PERIOD OF THE REUNION TILL THE  
PRESENT TIME.



## CHAPTER XI.

Aspect of the present times. Exciting events taking place. Influence of United Secession Church. First meeting of Synod after union. Papers presented by protesters. Summary of Principles published. New Formula. Pastoral address to the people. Final resolution of protesters. Declaration of Synod on subject. Professor Paxton and other ministers leave the Synod. Committee on theological tuition. Home missions appointed. Correspondence with Irish Synod. Deputation to Ireland. Account of their proceedings. Irish brethren send deputation to United Synod. Mission to Gibraltar. Visit of George the Fourth to Scotland. Synod agree to present a loyal address. Petition to parliament for abolition of slavery. Bill affecting the interests of Secession poor. Bill opposed by Synod. Legal opinion concerning maintenance of poor. Case of Mr Smith the missionary. Resolution of Synod respecting it. Dr Mitchell elected Biblical Professor. Rev. Cæsar Malan admitted a member of Synod. Correspondence with him. New Testimony adopted. And published. Pictou Academy. Opposition made to it. Receives support from United Synod. Sum raised for it by Secession students. Charter remodelled. Gives dissatisfaction. Death of Professor Dick. His character. Extended plan of theological tuition. Three new Professors chosen. Curriculum of study. General Assembly of America. Letter from Assembly to the Synod. Rev. Dr Cox. Congregational Union of England and Wales. Letter from Union to the Synod. Synod's answer. Deputation from Union to Synod. Rev. John Burnet. Deputation to Union. Proposed union with Relief Church. Declaration of Synod concerning stipends. Enactment concerning competing calls. Elders from vacant congregations to sit in church courts. Extended plan of missionary operations. Home missions. Mission to Canada. Missions to Jamaica and Trinidad. Rev. William Glen. Employed as translator of the Scriptures into the Persian language. Rev. John Monnard missioned to France. His death. Rev. Charles F. Major, of Strasburg. Employed by Synod on the continent. Mission to Shetland Isles. Secession in Lerwick. Mission fund. Remarks.

THOUGH the period which this portion of the Secession History embraces is short, yet events have taken place during

the course of it which possess a deep interest. The extraordinary movements that have been made, during the last twenty years, and that are now making, both in the religious and in the political worlds, indicate the near approach of some great crisis in human affairs. He must be a very inattentive observer of the present course of events, who does not perceive that changes of no ordinary kind are taking place in the frame-work of society ; and that, at no distant period, corresponding changes must be made in existing institutions, to suit them to the altered position and circumstances of the parties for whose benefit these institutions are professedly intended. As I am a firm believer in the progressive amelioration of society, and regard the various events, that are passing over us; as the machinery which providence is employing to bring about the arrival of the millennial era, instead of contemplating these events with a feeling of anxiety or dread, I look upon them as the harbingers of good to the church of Christ, as designed to usher in a brighter day in our world's history than any that it has yet seen.

In looking back upon the past, we do not find, that any decided step has ever been taken in advance, along the path either of social or of religious improvement, which has not been accompanied or preceded by a severe struggle, in consequence of contending principles coming into collision. In confirmation of this remark, we may appeal to the terrible commotion, which was produced amongst the nations of the world, by the introduction of christianity itself, one of the greatest blessings, certainly, which Heaven has conferred upon our earth. The first preachers of that divine and peaceful system, we know, were accused of turning the world upside down. They were regarded, by the influential classes, as disturbers of the public peace, as wild enthusiasts, as selfish, designing men, whom it was necessary to put down by the strong arm of power ; and the infant church had to sustain a series of bloody persecutions, before it was permitted to enjoy any thing like repose. Another confirmation of the statement that has been made may be found in the con-

vulsions, which were occasioned among the nations of Europe, by the re-kindling of the torch of truth at the period of the Reformation. Those venerable men who, under the guidance of heaven, took the lead in this noble work, did so at the peril of their lives. They, too, were accused of being disturbers of the peace. They were branded as heretics, and enemies of religion. When argument failed in putting them down, recourse was had to the sword. Europe became the theatre of wars carried on in the sacred name of religion; and the Reformation was cradled amid the din of arms and the shouts of the battle-field. In looking again at the page of history, we find another instance, illustrative of the position that has been advanced, in the stern and long continued struggles which preceded and accompanied the overthrow of civil and ecclesiastical despotism, at the period of the Revolution, in our own country. For at least half a century before that memorable event took place, there were great heavings in society, and master minds were at work unfolding and inculcating principles that were favourable to the cause of freedom. There was also a plentiful supply of nick-names and of abuse lavished upon those who had the honesty and the courage to make themselves singular, by espousing opinions that were comparatively new. But more than this, that never-failing argument of tyrants, the sword, was repeatedly employed to arrest the progress of society, that not a single movement should be made in advance, except what the minions of power should be pleased to permit. Yet advance it did, in spite of them. Opinion proved more powerful than the sword. After the public mind had become fairly leavened with the wholesome truths which had been taught, the old fabric fell with a crash to the ground; and a new one, considerably improved, though by no means perfect, was erected in its stead.

Another of these epochs in a nation's history has arrived. A war of opinion has again commenced in our country. The combatants are taking their ground calmly and deliberately. Society has begun to heave with one of those convulsive



struggles, which a collision of principle never fails to produce, where freedom of expression is allowed. It will assuredly happen in this, as in the instances already mentioned. The victory will not be decided either by abuse or by violence; but truth and justice, on whichever side these may lie, will ultimately prove triumphant. The re-union of the Secession Church has greatly increased its power and influence; and the remaining pages of this narrative will furnish ample proof, that the Secession has not regarded with indifference those exciting events, which have taken place in this portion of the empire, since the period of the re-union. Notwithstanding the disadvantages which the Secession has had to contend with, as a dissenting community, it has exercised a considerable influence, both directly and indirectly, in accelerating the progress of these events. Its ministers and people have shown themselves, in their united state, as they did when existing in a state of separation, the decided friends of all those measures which have been proposed to ameliorate the institutions of the country.

When the United Associate Synod assembled, the week after the union took place, several members, who had protested in the General Synod against forming a union upon the Basis as agreed to, "from a persuasion that it was defective, or not such as it ought to have been," presented a paper, in which they stated, "that they were not satisfied that they ought, at present, to carry their protest so far as to decline communion with those who had united;" but, in order to give relief to their consciences, they wished the following declaration to be inserted in the record:—"That, in acceding to the union, they did so in the way of reserving and holding it as their right, and duty, and privilege, to teach, preach, and maintain all the same doctrines, the same mode of worship, and laws of religion, which they had hitherto done, and which they considered themselves bound to by their ordination vows."

Another paper was presented by a few individuals, who had also protested in the General Synod against the union.

In this paper, they craved to have it marked, "that they did not fall from their protest, and had not freedom in their own minds to enter immediately into the measure of union, as proposed in the Basis." They stated, that there were some points on which their minds were much relieved, while there were others with regard to which they were not yet satisfied. At the same time, they begged leave to explain, "that they did not intend, by this paper, to state a separation from their brethren, with whom they had lived in fellowship, nor to shut the door against their own concurrence in the union, which afterwards may appear to them satisfactory."

As it was declared, in the fifth article of the Basis, that, while covenanting should not be required, in order to church communion, yet no obstruction should be thrown in the way, but every Scriptural facility afforded to those who might have clearness to proceed in it; so a bond, prepared and transmitted by the General Associate Synod, was adopted by the United Synod, and inserted in their record, to be made use of by those congregations that had "clearness to proceed" in this work. This bond is the same in spirit and in language (though somewhat abbreviated) as that which was employed by the General Associate Synod in 1805, when they engaged in the work of covenanting.

An exhibition of the principles held by the United Synod, having been previously prepared by a committee, was submitted to the consideration of the Synod; and, being carefully revised by them, was unanimously adopted. This excellent and most useful compendium was published under the title of "Summary of Principles, agreed upon by the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church, September 14, 1820." The Synod agreed, "That this paper is to be regarded as a compendious exhibition of our principles, and as a directory for the admission of members, who are to be considered as acceding to the principles contained in this Summary, according to the measure of their knowledge."

The union committee had prepared a new Formula of

Questions, to be employed in licensing preachers, and in ordaining ministers and elders. This Formula, after being revised and corrected, by the United Synod, was adopted, though not unanimously. Some of the questions in it occasioned considerable diversity of opinion, and underwent much discussion. Eleven ministers and one elder dissented from the particular phraseology employed in the third question, which required an acknowledgment of the presbyterian form of church government, as the *only* form "founded upon, and agreeable to, the word of God." Sixteen ministers and one elder dissented from the adopting of the fourth question, which requires an acknowledgment, "that public religious vowing or covenanting is a moral duty, to be practised when the circumstances of providence require it;" and also an approbation "of the method adopted by our reforming ancestors, for mutual excitement and encouragement, by solemn confederation and vows to God."

An excellent Pastoral Address to the people under the inspection of the Synod, on the subject of the union, was read; and, after being submitted to the revision of a committee, the Synod agreed that ten thousand copies of it should be printed and circulated among the congregations. This Address breathes a truly catholic spirit, and could not fail to have a happy influence in promoting a feeling of brotherly affection among the people, and in cementing the bond of union which had been formed.

Agreeably to the recommendation contained in a note annexed to the Basis, a committee was appointed to prepare a more detailed view of the articles of the Basis, as the Testimony of the United Church, containing the substance of the Judicial Act and Testimony, the Act concerning the doctrine of grace, and Answers to Nairn's Reasons of Dissent. The United Synod concluded their first meeting by a very appropriate act, viz. recommending to all the congregations under their inspection, to observe, at an early opportunity, a day of thanksgiving to God for the union which had been so happily consummated.



Some of the brethren, who had not acceded to the union, transmitted to the Synod, at their meeting in April 1821, two papers containing a statement of their case, with a request that they might be read and considered. The papers were read, and a committee was appointed to converse with the brethren. One of the papers contained certain queries, to which these brethren wished answers to be returned. They expressed considerable anxiety about the forthcoming Testimony, and were desirous that some pledge should be given by the Synod, with regard to the particulars which it should contain. The committee endeavoured to convince them, that it would be unreasonable to expect that the Synod would give them any pledge on this subject, or that they would re-consider, at present, the terms of the union. But they proposed to the protesters, that they should draw up a concise statement of their sentiments on those points, concerning which they entertained doubts, and make a declaration of the terms on which they would be willing to accede to the union; and should the Synod agree to record their statements (of which they entertained little doubt), they might then conscientiously join the United Church; and, in that case, they would have an opportunity of assisting in the formation of the Testimony. The Synod expressed their willingness to grant the indulgence which their committee proposed, in the hope that it would not be abused by the protesting brethren.

These brethren, however, did not think proper to acquiesce in the proposal that was thus made. Their final resolution was contained in the following communication, addressed by them to the moderator of the United Associate Synod :—

“REV. AND DEAR SIR,—We subscribers are very sensible of the kindness and attention we have experienced from the United Synod; but are obliged to say, that no personal exoneration can satisfy us, as it does not afford sufficient security for the maintenance of the public cause of the Secession. We beg leave to add, that so soon as the United Synod shall exhibit a Testimony embodying the principles,

and carrying forward the avowed design, of the Judicial Testimony, as the term of fellowship in the body, whatever steps we may find ourselves obliged to take in the mean time, we shall be ready, in that case, to accede to the union. We are, most respectfully," &c.

“ JAMES GRAY.                    THOMAS GRAY.  
     ROBERT SMITH.            WILLIAM BEATH.  
     GEORGE STEVENSON. JAMES AIRD.  
     JAMES TEMPLETON. PETER M'DERMAID.”\*

The Synod, after receiving this communication, expressed much regret that their brethren should decline co-operating with them on the terms proposed. They terminated their proceedings on this subject, by entering the following resolution on their record:—“That, while the Synod is desirous to show all lenity to these brethren, it is bound to consult the edification of those members of their congregations, who approve of the union, and already consider themselves as members of the United Secession Church; and the Synod refers it to the presbyteries, in whose bounds these congregations are, to grant such relief as they shall see proper.”

Professor Paxton was one of those who did not acquiesce in the union. He had, in the month of December, the preceding year (1820), sent a letter to the Edinburgh presbytery, stating that he could no longer take the charge of the Theological Seminary. This letter was laid before the Synod, at their present meeting. The Synod agreed to accept of Mr Paxton's resignation; and they appointed a committee to wait upon him, and communicate to him this resolution, and also to express to him their thanks for his

\* Mr James Aird, one of the subscribers of the above letter, did not leave the United Secession Church. All the other ministers, whose names are affixed to the letter, withdrew from her communion; also Professor Paxton, Mr William Mitchell of Clola, and Mr Richard Black of Perth. They soon after this formed a union with that section of the Secession, that withdrew from the General Associate Synod, including Professor Bruce, Dr M'Crie, &c. The two parties, united, are now known by the name of the “Associate Synod of Original Seceders.” Mr James Templeton of Aberdeen, one of the brethren who did not acquiesce in the union, a few years ago withdrew from the “Original Seceders,” and became a member of the United Associate Synod.

past services. At the same time, they recorded in their minutes, "their well founded approbation of the laborious, faithful, and disinterested manner in which he had fulfilled his duties, as Theological Tutor, under the late General Associate Synod ;" and they declared "their fullest conviction, that an unfeigned regard to the best interests of his pupils, and the welfare of the Secession Church alone, in opposition to any undue attachment to the emoluments of office, engaged him to continue in the discharge of its functions until the period at which he resigned it into the hands of the presbytery of Edinburgh, and through them into the hands of the United Associate Synod." After some deliberation, it was considered advisable not to appoint a successor to Mr Paxton at present ; but a committee was appointed to take the subject of a second professorship into consideration, and to report at a future meeting. In the mean time, Dr Dick was requested to take all the students of divinity under his charge during the ensuing session.

The United Synod showed the interest which they took in the propagation of the gospel at home, by appointing, at this meeting, two of their members to itinerate during the summer months in the Orkney Islands ; another member to preach in Dingwall, and itinerate in the neighbourhood ; and a fourth to labour among the Gaelic population of the Western Highlands. They also gave a recommendation to the presbytery of Elgin to preach in those districts, within their bounds, where the inhabitants might stand most in need of the gospel ; and they granted them a sum to defray the expenses that might thus be incurred.

The Rev. David Stuart of Dublin, a minister of the United Secession Church in Ireland, being present on this occasion, was invited to take his seat, and to correspond, as a member of the Irish United Synod. A committee was appointed to hold a conference with him, concerning a proposal that was made to admit Irish students to study divinity in the Theological Seminary connected with the United Synod in Scotland, and also to consider the mode of carry-



ing on a friendly intercourse betwixt the sister Synods of Scotland and Ireland. It was ultimately resolved, that the Irish students (if properly attested) should be permitted to attend the prelections of the Theological Professor, connected with the United Associate Synod; but that their enjoying this privilege would not entitle them to receive licence, with a view to their becoming preachers in this country. It was further resolved, as a means of maintaining a friendly intercourse with the United Synod in Ireland, that a deputation should be sent to attend a meeting of that Synod, which was to take place during the course of the summer. This deputation consisted of the Rev. Dr Mitchell of Glasgow, and the Rev. Patrick Bradley of Lilliesleaf.\*

These brethren met with a most affectionate reception from the Irish Synod. Giving an account of their embassy, at the first meeting of the United Synod after their return home, they said:—"Your deputies were heard in explanation of the objects of their mission; and, on an occasion so extraordinary, and so deeply interesting, they could not avoid overstepping the mere forms of business, and giving utterance to the feelings of their hearts. The effect of the whole was solemn and melting. All were affected, and several were in tears; but they were tears of affection and joy. Your deputies could not but remember those 'times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord,' which preceded and accompanied that union in which we rejoice, and of which this our mission was one of the pleasing fruits. The spirit of love and of peace was present, and was powerfully operating. At that moment, the union of the two Synods, in their new and conjunct character, was formed and sealed, in feeling and in purpose."

The Irish Synod entered on their record the following resolution, expressive of the pleasure which they felt in being visited by the deputation from Scotland:—"The Synod do

\* The Rev. William Kidston of Glasgow was appointed a member of the deputation, but was unexpectedly prevented from accompanying them to Ireland.

hereby express our joy and gratitude for the communications transmitted by the Associate Synod, Scotland, for the papers friendly forwarded, for the kind favour of sending a deputation to correspond with us. The Synod do communicate our warmest thanks for the marked regards of the Associate Synod to us, for their exertions in promoting the interests of the Secession in Ireland; and we do earnestly wish to maintain intimate correspondence with them, as a senior and sister church." They appointed three of their members—Messrs James Rentoul, William Moorhead, and James Rankin—as a deputation to attend the meeting of the Scottish Synod in the ensuing spring.

Two of these brethren—Messrs Rentoul and Moorhead—attended the meeting of the Synod in spring (Mr Rankin was prevented by family affliction from being present), and gave an interesting account of the exertions of the Secession Church in Ireland, in diffusing the knowledge of the gospel in that country. They also presented to the Synod a copy of the articles of union between the two branches of the Secession in Ireland, and the subsequent minutes of their supreme court. The United Synod expressed their great satisfaction with the exertions and success of their brethren in Ireland, in extending the kingdom of Christ; and they gave a recommendation to societies for religious purposes, connected with congregations under their inspection, to remember, in the division of their funds, the missions of the Secession Church, in that part of the United Kingdom.

In May 1822, an application was made, in name of some of the British residents at Gibraltar, for a minister, in connexion with the United Secession Church, to be sent to preach the gospel in that place. This application was referred to a committee, who were authorised to send a minister to Gibraltar, that he might ascertain the circumstances of the case, and make the necessary arrangements for a permanent supply of sermon being sent, should the information received, in answer to the committee's inquiries, be favourable. The person who undertook this mission, at the re-

quest of the committee was Mr James Pringle, minister at Newcastle,—an individual well qualified, by his talents and activity, for such an enterprise. Mr Pringle, after labouring for several months at Gibraltar, was succeeded in the mission by Mr Archibald Baird, minister at Auchtermuchty,\* whose popular talents and manners could not fail to render his services acceptable. The people in Gibraltar found that they could not command the funds necessary for defraying the expense connected with this mission; and they wrote to the committee, that unless the whole expenses were defrayed by the Synod, they would be under the necessity of declining to receive any additional supply of preachers. The Synod were deeply impressed with the importance of Gibraltar as a missionary station, and were anxious to give every encouragement to the promoting of the knowledge of the gospel in that place. But, as their missionary fund was not so copiously supplied at that period as it is now, they could not engage to bear the whole expense. They remitted the business to the committee formerly appointed, authorizing them to correspond with the people in Gibraltar, to encourage them in their exertions, and to send them a preacher so soon as might be deemed expedient. After the return of Mr Baird, no other preacher was sent, and the correspondence between the Synod and the people of Gibraltar ceased.

In the month of August 1822, George IV. paid a visit to Scotland, and all classes vied with one another in expressions of loyalty to their sovereign. Addresses were poured in upon him from every quarter. At the first meeting of the United Associate Synod, after the king's visit, a motion was brought forward, that a dutiful and loyal address should be presented to his Majesty. This motion was opposed, chiefly on the ground, that the Synod, being an ecclesiastical court, and the representatives of a spiritual community, were not competent to present such an address; and, at all events, that there was no particular call for any such measure being adopted on the present occasion. A long discussion ensued.

\* Now in Paisley.



The opponents of the address, however, did not move a direct negative; they proposed only a delay; and the vote being taken on the question, "Shall the Synod present an address to the King immediately, or delay?" it was carried, by a great majority, that an address should be immediately presented. From this decision of Synod, ten ministers dissented. An address being drawn up by a committee, and having received the approbation of the Synod, it was transmitted to his Majesty.

At the next meeting of Synod, in the following spring, the attention of the court was drawn toward the evils of slavery; and they were required to throw their influence into the scale of humanity, by joining in the philanthropic movement that was then making for the entire abolition of this dreadful scourge. A motion was made, that a petition be presented to Parliament, "for the immediate mitigation, and ultimate abolition, of slavery throughout the British dominions." Some members were averse to petitioning Parliament on the subject; while, at the same time, they joined with their brethren in reprobating in the strongest terms, the iniquitous system of slavery, and in expressing their earnest desire for its total overthrow. They moved, "That the Synod shall agree in expressing their deep abhorrence of slavery, and in recommending to the members of this court, and to those under their charge, to take all scriptural and habile means for turning the attention of the moral and religious public to this great evil, and to the fittest means for its speedy abolition." This last motion did not meet with general support. A large majority decided in favour of presenting a petition to Parliament. A petition was accordingly prepared, and, being subscribed by the moderator and clerk in name of the Synod, was forwarded to the British legislature, calling upon them to adopt immediate measures for mitigating the evils of slavery, and to take steps for effecting its entire abolition, as soon as practicable. It was also earnestly recommended to all the congregations of the United Secession Church, to make a general movement on

this great question, and to take the earliest opportunity of presenting petitions to Parliament on this subject.

A bill was brought into Parliament, in the spring of 1824, entitled, "A bill to regulate the relief granted to the poor in Scotland." It was understood that the interest of the poor belonging to the Secession Church would be materially affected by this bill, should it be passed into a law. When the United Synod met in April, the same year, they appointed a committee to take this bill into consideration, and to report what influence it would have upon the poor belonging to dissenting communities, and also what measures it might be necessary to adopt in reference to it. The report of the committee was, that a petition should be immediately presented to Parliament against the bill. The Synod adopted this recommendation of their committee; and a petition was drawn out, subscribed by the members of Synod, and transmitted to Parliament, craving that the bill might be rejected.

At this period complaints were made that in some parishes the kirk-sessions either refused to give any allowance to the Secession poor from the parochial funds, or that the alimment was given very partially, and sometimes with a threat that it would be withheld altogether. It was deemed necessary, for the information of ministers, especially of those residing in the country, to ascertain the exact state of the law of Scotland with regard to the maintenance of the poor. A memorial on the subject was prepared by a committee of Synod, and submitted to the consideration of William Ellis, Esq. solicitor in Edinburgh, one of the law agents of the Synod. The opinion which he returned, on account of the general importance of the subject to which it refers, I have considered deserving of a place in this record. It was to the following effect:—

"I beg leave humbly to submit as my opinion, that the poor of Seceder congregations are placed by law exactly upon the same footing with the poor of the Established Church; and if the heritors and elders of any congregation in Scotland

were to refuse relief to a pauper, on the ground that he did not belong to the Established Church, the Court of Session would, upon being applied to, grant redress. The memorialists will be aware, that the right by which a pauper acquires a title to relief, arises either from being born in the parish, or a certain residence within its bounds. The law pays no respect to the religious opinions of the pauper, but looks merely to his poverty and inability to gain his bread. A few months ago, a case occurred in the Court of Session, where a meeting of the elders and heritors in the West of Scotland had refused to give relief to a pauper, because he was an Irishman, although he had resided the legal time within the parish. The Court unanimously altered the sentence of the elders and heritors, and found the Irishman entitled to relief.

“ By an application to the Supreme Court, therefore, it will be easy to get the better of any attempt on the part of the heritors and elders to keep Seceders from getting on the roll of the poor. It will be more difficult, however, to prevent them from making a difference in the sums given to the poor of the Establishment and Seceders, as a great deal in this respect, must be left to the discretion of the heritors and elders. Should they, however, show a gross partiality in this respect, I think the Supreme Court would even here grant redress.”

A strong sensation was excited among the friends of missions, throughout the British Empire, by intelligence which reached this country early in 1824, that Mr John Smith, one of the London Society's missionaries in Demerara, had been tried and condemned by a court-martial for exciting a spirit of rebellion among the slaves in that colony, and for aiding in the insurrection after it had broken out. Though the evidence adduced on Mr Smith's trial (which was afterwards published), sufficiently established, in the estimation of all unprejudiced persons, his innocence of the crimes laid to his charge, and though the very verdict which was returned, while it declared that he had promoted discontent



in the minds of the negroes, and had held communication with one of the insurgents, acquitted him of any intention to excite revolt, yet his judges sentenced him to be hanged, but recommended him to mercy. The sentence of death was remitted by the government at home ; and directions were sent out that Mr Smith should be dismissed from the colony, and should enter into recognizance not to reside within any settlement belonging to his Majesty in the West Indies. The Directors of the London Missionary Society took up the matter with promptitude. After an examination of the evidence on which sentence had been pronounced against Mr Smith, they passed resolutions declaring their conviction, that their missionary was not guilty of any of the charges alleged, and that the insurrection was not either directly or indirectly promoted by him. They further declared, that they could not withdraw their confidence and esteem from Mr Smith, whose innocence they saw no cause to impugn ; and they gave instructions to tender immediately an appeal (should it be deemed advisable by Mr Smith's counsel) against the sentence of the court-martial, with a view to have the subject investigated before the Lords of his Majesty's Privy Council in England. In the mean time, Mr Smith died in the colonial jail, broken down under the effects of the harsh treatment which he had received. He was generally believed to have fallen a victim to the hostility which the leading men in the colony cherished against the missionary cause. The proceedings which had been carried on against him, and which terminated so tragically, were regarded as having originated in a spirit of persecution, and as designed to remove out of the way one who had shown himself a decided friend of the slaves. " The finger of truth," said the Directors of the London Society, " guided by the unanimous voice of the christian church will inscribe on its records the name of JOHN SMITH, as one of its Martyrs, in the cause of spreading the gospel of their common Lord among the enslaved sons of Africa."

There was a loud cry raised by the friends of missions,

among all denominations of christians in this country, for investigation to be made into the circumstances of this melancholy case. The success of missions in the British colonies was deeply involved in the matter. The personal safety of the missionaries was at stake ; and it was necessary that a united and indignant testimony should be lifted up against the iniquitous proceedings at Demerara, to deter others from acting a similar tragedy. The United Associate Synod, sensitively alive to every public proceeding calculated to affect the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom at home or abroad, let their voice be heard amid the general shout of indignation. At their first meeting after the above transactions were made public, a resolution was proposed expressive of the opinion which the Synod entertained of these extraordinary proceedings. This resolution, which was unanimously adopted, was to the following effect :—“ In reviewing the present state of missionary operations in various parts of the world, the Synod agree to express and to record their sincere sympathy with the London Missionary Society, under the injuries which they have sustained in the late extraordinary proceedings at Demerara against their unoffending missionary, Mr Smith ; and, at the same time, to avow their full persuasion that an investigation of the whole affair is loudly called for, in justice to the memory of the deceased, as well as for protecting other missionary agents from similar injurious treatment, in every quarter of the British dominions.”

The business concerning the appointment of a second Professor was not determined till the month of April 1825. It had been repeatedly discussed in committees, in presbyteries, and in the Synod. Some members were of opinion that two professors were indispensable, both for the sake of the students, and also for the sake of cementing more firmly the union ; others thought that the business of theological tuition would be better conducted, by having only one Professor. A printed report on this subject had been in the hands of members, since the month of September 1823. The com-

mittee who had prepared this report, had given their opinion in favour of the appointment of a second Professor. When the Synod entered on the consideration of this question, at the period above mentioned, a long discussion ensued, which terminated in the court declaring it as their opinion, "that the appointment of a second Professor is expedient for promoting the improvement of the system of theological tuition." On deliberating, what department should be assigned to the additional Professor, they resolved, "that the business of the new Professor shall be to give a course of lectures on the history, evidence, and interpretation of the sacred books; to direct the reading of the students; and to examine them on these subjects; to read to them portions of the Scriptures in the original critically; and to require from them explanatory and critical exercises." Having made these arrangements, they delayed electing the new Professor till they should meet in autumn. On the 15th of September, Dr John Mitchell, one of the ministers of Glasgow, was elected Professor of Biblical Literature to the United Associate Synod; and that respected individual still continues to discharge the duties connected with the important situation which he was then called upon to occupy.\*

A communication was laid before the Synod, at their meeting in spring 1825, from the Rev. Cæsar Malan of Geneva, which was received by them with much satisfaction. In this communication, he stated his adherence to the doctrines contained in the Shorter Catechism, as the exhibition of his faith; and expressed the disappointment which he felt, in being prevented by urgent duty from being present at this meeting of the Synod, and enjoying with them the fellowship of love in Christ. The expulsion of Mr Malan from

\* The course of theological study prescribed to the candidates for the ministry, at this period, was the following:—They were required to attend the prelections of the Professor of Biblical Literature the first two years, and the prelections of the Professor of Systematic Theology (Dr Dick) the last three years of their curriculum. Each session of the Divinity Hall extended to eight weeks, and every student was required to be present at least six weeks of the session, otherwise it did not count as one of the prescribed course.



his church, in the city of Geneva, and the persecution to which he had otherwise been subjected, on account of his faithful ministrations of the gospel, had excited a lively interest in him, among the friends of religion in this country : And those ministers of the Secession who were acquainted with his history, were ready to hold out to him the right hand of fellowship, and to hail him as a fellow-labourer in the vineyard of their common Master. In reply to his communication, the Synod agreed to send him a letter, expressing the christian affection which they felt for him, and declaring their hope that they would see him amongst them, at some future period, and receive him as a brother in the Lord. At their meeting in autumn, the same year, they resumed the consideration of this subject. They learned that their letter had not reached Mr Malan, and that he could not be present with them on this occasion. But proceeding on the personal knowledge which several of their members possessed of Mr Malan, and having otherwise obtained good information of his soundness in the faith, and of his holding the presbyterian form of church-government, they agreed, “ on account of his being a foreigner, and of his peculiar circumstances, without any farther delay, to receive him into ministerial and christian communion ; and they appointed that the deed of this court, recognising the Rev. M. Cæsar Malan, as a minister of this church, certified by the moderator and clerk, shall be forwarded to him without delay.”

This deed of the Synod was joyfully received, and gratefully acknowledged, by Mr Malan. A letter was read from him, at next meeting, which excited much interest. The Synod agreed to testify anew their affection for him, and to express their gratitude to God for having formed a connexion, and opened a channel of intercourse, which may strengthen his hands, and prove of advantage for promoting the interests of religion. They also appointed a committee to correspond with him ; “ and, in particular, to give him assurance that the Synod will be happy if, in any form, they can be instru-

mental in promoting the revival of religion in that part of the world, to which the churches of the Reformation in general, and the British churches in particular, owe an immense debt of gratitude."

In some of Mr Malan's writings, which appeared in this country soon after he was received into the communion of the Synod, statements of doctrine were made, which it was alleged were inconsistent with the standards of the Secession Church. The Synod considered it their duty to make inquiry into the truth of the allegation, and a committee was appointed to correspond with Mr Malan, to state to him the complaints that had been made concerning these parts of his writings, and to obtain from him an explanation of the views which he held on those doctrinal points concerning which he had expressed himself in language that was regarded by some as objectionable. The answer which Mr Malan returned to the committee's communication, breathed an excellent spirit, and afforded much satisfaction to the Synod. He expressed the grateful sense which he had of the Synod's kindness, in appointing a committee to correspond with him on the subject which had given them anxiety; and he assured them, "that, after the most careful reperusal of the standards of the Secession Church, his sentiments respecting the assurance and appropriation of faith, are in accordance with these standards." The committee were appointed to continue their correspondence with him, at his own request; and also to furnish him with copies of the Testimony.

The draught of a new Testimony, which had been for some time in the hands of a committee, for the purpose of being revised and corrected, was laid upon the Synod's table, in the month of September 1826. This document occupied the attention of the Synod, during several sederunts, at two successive meetings; and, on the 20th September, 1827, it was finally adopted. In adopting the Testimony, they agreed that it should be recommended to the attention of their people, as containing a defence and illustration of the principles of the Secession, but that an approbation of

the various articles in it should not be considered as indispensable to holding communion with the Secession Church. The Secession terms of communion are to be found in the Confession of Faith, the Catechisms (Larger and Shorter), and Summary of Principles; and it was declared that the Testimony should not be exalted to a place of equal authority with these documents. The following is the enactment of the Synod upon this subject:—

“ That, while they retain the Confession of Faith and Catechisms (as recognised in the Basis of Union), and the Summary of Principles, as their creed, or confession of faith, or terms of communion, and therefore do not elevate the Testimony to the place of authority which these standards occupy; they, having deliberately reviewed it, do adopt and sanction it as a defence and illustration of the principles and design of the Secession, and do earnestly recommend it to the candid and diligent perusal of all under their charge.

“ And, farther, the Synod agreed that a reference shall be made to said Testimony, in the *Formula of Ordination*, and that the fifth question shall be expressed in the following terms:—‘ Do you consider, as still valid, those reasons of secession from the judicatories of the Established Church, which are stated in the Testimonies emitted by the Secession Church, namely, the sufferance of error, without adequate censure; the infringement of the rights of the christian people, in the choice and settlement of their ministers, under the law of patronage; the neglect or relaxation of discipline; the restraint of ministerial freedom in opposing mal-administration; and the refusal of the prevailing party to be reclaimed? Do you approve of the principles and design of the Secession, for the more full illustration of which, the Testimony, as adopted by the United Associate Synod in September 1827, has been emitted? And do you resolve, through grace, to prosecute the design of the Secession?’ ”

From this deed of Synod, agreeing to insert in the *Formula*, a reference to the Testimony, three ministers dissented.

In the preceding pages of this work, the attention of the



reader has been repeatedly directed to the exertions made by the Secession Church, to send the gospel to Nova Scotia. The ministers that were sent, at various periods, to that province, by the two Secession Synods, were eminently useful in promoting the religious improvement of the colonists. To their enlightened and persevering exertions, aided by the friends of literature and science, the Academical Institution at Pictou owed its existence. This institution was founded on a plan similar to that of the Scotch colleges, and was erected for the purpose of giving a liberal education to the children of dissenters, who were excluded from the only other academical institution in the province (the King's College at Windsor), by the episcopalian tests that were there imposed. After the union took place in 1818, among the various denominations of presbyterians in Nova Scotia, the United Presbyterian Church in that province resolved to prosecute a scheme of missionary labour, with a view to propagate the knowledge of the gospel in the surrounding districts. They wisely considered, that the best method of accomplishing this, would be by training up preachers from their own congregations. For this purpose, they requested the Rev. Dr M'Culloch, who was Principal of the Pictou College, to take under his charge, as Professor of Divinity, those young men who had completed their academical course at that institution, and whose views were directed to the office of the holy ministry. Complying with this request of his brethren, Dr M'Culloch commenced a private theological class, which he taught gratuitously; and, in the course of a few years, several young men of talents and piety, were licensed to preach the gospel, whose labours were of great service to the cause of religion in that quarter of the world.

The popular constitution of the seminary at Pictou, which rendered it a favourite with the mass of the population, excited against it the hostility of those who saw in it a formidable rival to the lordly episcopalian institution at Windsor. A system of opposition was commenced against the Pictou Academy. Great efforts were made to mar its prosperity, if

not to crush it altogether. In this opposition, the bishop of the province, and a faction who acted along with him, took a decided part. From the commencement of the institution at Pictou, the sum of £400 was annually voted by the provincial legislature for its support. Repeated attempts were made by the friends of the institution to render this endowment permanent. Several times a bill, for this purpose, was brought forward in the House of Assembly, and was passed by large and respectable majorities; but it was uniformly rejected by the council (the upper house of the legislature, consisting of twelve persons), of which the bishop is a member; and, on one occasion, it was negatived by his casting vote. The influence of this hostile party was such, that they at last succeeded, not merely in rejecting the bill for a permanent endowment to the Pictou College, but also in throwing out the bill for the annual grant, although both of these had triumphantly passed the Assembly. The infant institution was thus left, for a season, to the unaided exertions of its friends.

Matters were fast hastening to this crisis, when Dr M'Culloch paid a visit to this country in 1826, to excite an interest among the friends of religion on behalf of the struggling academical institution at Pictou. As a considerable proportion of the ministers composing the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, were of Secession origin; and, as the Pictou Academy was closely identified with the prosperity of that church, so Dr M'Culloch, on arriving in this country, made application for assistance to the United Associate Synod. Nor was his appeal to that body made in vain. The sympathy of both ministers and people was strongly excited in behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, and of the Pictou Institution. At a meeting of the Synod, held in the month of April 1826, they heard Dr M'Culloch give an interesting statement of the difficulties which he and his brethren had to encounter, and of the opposition that was given to their infant college. After listening to his statement, the Synod were unanimous in recording their opinion,

“ that the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, and the Pictou Institution, have strong claims on the sympathy and liberality of the presbyterian, and other churches in Britain, and of associations for religious purposes, and especially of the United Secession Church.” They issued a recommendation to the congregations under their inspection, to make a collection, without delay, in aid of the funds of the Pictou Academical Institution; and they appointed a committee to prepare a short statement of the claims of the Institution, to be read from the pulpit of each congregation, when the collection was intimated, and also to consider what farther measures might be adopted “ for promoting the interests of our sister church in Nova Scotia.”

This committee drew up and circulated among the congregations an excellent address, in which, after stating the circumstances in which the Pictou Academy had been formed, and the difficulties it had to struggle with, they concluded with the following energetic appeal to the Secession:—“ From the Secession Church in particular, the Pictou Academy is entitled to the kindest regards. It is the legitimate offspring of that gospel with which our fathers of the Secession and we have rejoiced the wilderness. When no other church cared for the presbyterians of those parts, we sent to them our brethren to share their hardships, and to cheer them with the consolations of mercy; and our brethren went not in vain. Amidst privation and toil they have persevered in their labours, till the seed which they have sown has produced, and still promises, an abundant harvest. In the face of an opposing episcopacy, they have not only planted the presbyterian church, containing above thirty ministers, but founded a seminary which gives it the prospect of enlargement and permanence. But the very success of our brethren has aroused opposition; and, because they have proceeded from the Secession Church, their institution is an object of avowed hostility, excluded from patronage to which it is fairly entitled, and, in the midst of difficulty, now struggling for existence. Missionaries in other lands have been cherished by



the resources of powerful societies ; ours have themselves borne the burden and heat of the day, till the fruit of their toil presents the prospect of a rich harvest in Christ ; and now, when opposed and thwarted, they have asked our sympathy, shall we say, You must struggle alone ? Other societies protect their missionary institutions with a jealous care ; and shall our missionaries be left to brood over the ruins of a fabric which they have so well and so faithfully reared ? The Secession Church assigned to them the field of their labours : the work is not theirs, it is our work ; and, as was the planting, the watering should be ours. In name of the Synod of the United Church, therefore,—for the sake of our brethren abroad,—for the honour of the Secession at home,—and for the sake of Him who has honoured you to plant his church in the waste places of the wilderness,—we ask you to show to those whom you have sent to this work, that you feel for them in their difficulties, and care for them, and, after the example of the God of the church, will not forsake the work of your own hands.”

When the Synod met again in the month of September, they received from their committee a report of the measures which had been adopted, with the view of strengthening the hands of the brethren in Nova Scotia, and of giving support to their Academical Institution. These measures were approved of, and the Synod showed the deep interest which they took in this business, by entering on their record the following resolution :—“ That the Synod, being well assured of the destitute condition, as to the means of religious instruction, of many of our countrymen in the British colonies of North America, and being convinced that it is their duty to endeavour to supply these wants ; and of the superior advantages of having these wants supplied through the instrumentality of the church already planted, and by ministers educated in these colonies ; and farther, that having the fullest confidence in the integrity, wisdom, and zeal of their brethren of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia ; and being impressed with the importance of the Academical Institution of Pictou,

for securing a regular supply of ministers and teachers for these colonies, do earnestly recommend to the ministers and people under their care, to exert themselves in the establishment and maintenance of a society, or societies, for promoting the religious improvement of our North American colonies, by aiding the Pictou Academical Institution, and the missionary exertions of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia; and, at the same time, the Synod agreed to renew the recommendation to those congregations, which have not yet found it convenient to make the collection in aid of the Pictou Academical Institution; and farther to state, that assistance promptly afforded will be more efficient than at a more distant period, and will operate more powerfully to the encouragement of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, whose exertions to extend the knowledge of the gospel, in those parts of the world, are worthy of the warmest approbation, and give them strong claims to the sympathy and co-operation of British christians in general, and especially of their brethren of the Secession Church."

The exertions that were thus made to excite an interest, in favour of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Pictou Academy, were not in vain. Soon after the above recommendation was given, a society was formed in Glasgow, consisting of ministers and laymen, belonging not merely to the Secession but to various dissenting communities, having for its object the raising of funds for the support of the Presbyterian Church and Academical Institution of Nova Scotia. Collections were made for the same benevolent purpose, by several of the Secession congregations. The students attending the Theological Seminary of the United Secession Church, under the Rev. Drs Dick and Mitchell, generously pledged themselves at one of their meetings to raise, during the months of the intervening vacation, the sum of one hundred pounds in aid of the same cause: And before the return of another session of the Hall, they had not only redeemed their pledge, but doubled it, by raising *two* instead of one hundred pounds. The result

of these united efforts was, that during the years 1828-29, the liberal sum of £481, was remitted to the brethren in Nova Scotia for the support of their religious and literary institutions.

This seasonable supply was received with gratitude ; and the trustees of the Pictou Academy sent a letter to the United Synod, expressing their thanks for the friendly exertions which the Synod had made in behalf of their institution. The opposition to it, however, still continued ; and it was resolved, by the brethren in Nova Scotia, to lay before his Majesty's government a representation of the grievances under which they laboured. Joseph Blanchard, Esq. a member of the colonial legislature, was sent over by them to this country, for the purpose now mentioned. He was introduced to the Synod, at their meeting in April 1831 ; and being permitted to address the court, he returned thanks, in the name of his constituents, for the pecuniary aid which had been received from the Secession Church, and from other friends in this country,—“ without which (he said) the Pictou Institution could not have continued to impart to the inhabitants of that province the benefit of a liberal education.” He farther craved the countenance and support of the Secession Church, in the application which he was about to make to his Majesty's government. The Synod entered with zeal into the business which had brought Mr Blanchard to this country. They resolved to second his efforts, by presenting an address to the king, in behalf of the Presbyterian Church and Academy of Nova Scotia. An address was accordingly prepared by a committee, subscribed by the moderator and clerk of the Synod, and delivered to Mr Blanchard, that he might get it presented in due form. The committee, by whom the address was prepared, were also appointed “ to correspond with, and to interest in behalf of Mr Blanchard's constituents, friends in London, who may give him countenance and co-operation in his application to government.”

Soon after this the charter of the Pictou Academy was



remodelled. A sum of £400 annually, for the support of the Institution, was granted for a period of ten years, and some new arrangements were made with regard to the course of education to be pursued in the Academy. In a letter written by one of the ministers of Nova Scotia (dated 8th May, 1832), we find the following reference to these arrangements:—"The controversy occasioned by the Pictou Academy, and that has so long and so furiously raged in this part of the province, is at length at an end, at least for ten years, and all parties are, or at least ought to be satisfied. His Majesty's council have granted the Institution £400 annually for ten years. Dr M'Culloch is to have £250, and £100 to go for teaching the lower branches, to please the Kirk party. The Doctor's son will receive the remaining £50, and as much more as the Trustees think meet. The council have also granted £400 to enable the Trustees to set the system agoing. Probably a house for the lower branches will have to be built. Seven of the old Trustees are to remain in office, and four new ones are to be chosen by the governor to represent the Kirk party. The new system must be in operation by the first of July."\*

The new arrangements did not give satisfaction to all the parties concerned. Some of the friends of the Academy became disheartened, and ceased to make exertions for its support. The United Synod in Scotland, having learned that the affairs of the Institution were in a drooping condition, and that there was some danger lest the college might be closed for the higher branches of education, or pass into the hands of those who were hostile to the interests of the presbyterian church, wrote a letter to the brethren of Nova Scotia, urging upon them the importance of maintaining the Institution in a state of efficiency. From the reply which was returned to this letter, and which is dated 29th June, 1837, the following extract is given. The account which it contains of the prospects of the Pictou Academical Institution is by no means flattering:—"The situation of the Pic-

\* Letter from the Rev. David Roy in the Theological Magazine for 1832.

tou Academy, from which source alone we can expect young men to emanate, prepared by a liberal education to enter upon the study of divinity, we are sorry to say is far from being such as its friends could wish. A variety of circumstances have concurred to bring this Seminary to its present condition. With the proceedings of the provincial legislature towards it, we presume you are already acquainted. Of its contendings with the clergymen in connexion with the Established Church of Scotland, we know you are not ignorant. Of the full extent of the injury which it has sustained by the remodelling of its charter, some of you perhaps are not so fully aware. By this change, its deadliest enemies have been admitted to a participation in the trust ; and, as might have been expected, have exerted their influence to ruin the Institution. Already one hundred of the four hundred pounds of the provincial endowment has been applied to the teaching of those elementary branches, which are taught in almost every grammar school in the province, and in one within a few roods of the Academy. By this appropriation of its funds, the original system of education pursued in this Institution, has been essentially impaired. From inadequacy of funds, the second teacher was, for a time, compelled to abandon his situation ; and for the same reason, natural philosophy no longer constitutes part of the Academic course. The influence of the hostile trustees in the Board has, no doubt, to a considerable extent, damped the ardour of some of its friends. Besides, for several years, the expectations of our husbandmen have been disappointed by extensive failures of the crops ; and during the past year many of our people have been, and still are, straitened to procure the means of immediate subsistence. In such circumstances great liberality is not to be expected. But we dare not conceal the fact, that many of our members manifest towards the Institution a coldness which could not have been anticipated. When we reflect upon the small sum which it would require from each individual in our connexion, to place this Seminary beyond the reach of its most invete-

rate foes ; and when we think of its vast importance to our church, we cannot refrain from mourning over their want of liberality. It affords us much pleasure, however, to add, that though this disposition is too prevalent, it is by no means universal. There are amongst us not a few whose zeal neither the frowns of the legislature, nor the influence of enemies in the board of trustees, nor the severity of the times, nor the apathy of brethren can damp, and who are still willing to make great exertions in its behalf." \*

Such is the account given, by the brethren in Nova Scotia, of the unfavourable circumstances in which the Pictou Academy is at present placed. It will be a source of much regret to its friends in Scotland, if an institution so well fitted to promote the cause both of religion and literature in that distant region, shall be permitted to languish for want of adequate support.

On the 25th of January, 1833, the Rev. Dr Dick, of Glasgow, one of the Theological Professors of the United Associate Synod, was unexpectedly removed by death. He died in the 69th year of his age, and the 47th of his ministry. For a period of nearly thirteen years, he occupied the professorial chair ; and the arduous duties connected with that important situation, he discharged with great ability and success. As a scholar, a divine, and a gentleman, he occupied a high place. He possessed a clear, discriminating understanding, a finely-polished taste, a richly cultivated mind, and a most extensive, as well as profound, acquaintance with the various departments of theological literature. His " Essay on the Inspiration of the Scriptures," procured for him, at an early period of his ministry, a high reputation as a theological writer. This production has long been regarded as a standard work in divinity. For chaste simplicity of style, elegance of diction, lucid arrangement, and conclusive reasoning, it will bear a comparison with the most admired productions of either ancient or modern times. His " Lec-

\* Letter from the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia to the United Associate Synod.



tures on Theology," which have been published since his death, have placed, on a solid and lasting basis, the fame of Dr Dick. These lectures show the extent, the variety, and solidity of his learning. They constitute, if not the best, at least one of the very best, systems of divinity extant in the English language. It is certainly a cause of gratitude to the Secession Church, that, from the commencement of her history, her theological chair should have been occupied by a succession of men who have been distinguished for their extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, their high attainments in theology, and their general acquaintance with the various branches of literature.

When the death of Dr Dick was announced to the United Synod, at their meeting in April, they entered on their record, the following tribute of respect to his memory :—" In recording the decease of the Rev. Dr Dick, the Synod reckon it due to his character, and his valuable services, to express, in their minutes, the high esteem in which he is held as a man, as a christian, as a minister of the gospel, and as Professor of Theology, under the United Associate Synod,—an office, the duties of which, during the term of thirteen years, he discharged with exemplary diligence and fidelity, and with advantage to the churches of the Secession ; and the gratitude which is due to him for the benefit which, by his instrumentality, the exalted Saviour has conferred, and continues to confer on them, in his having trained so large a proportion of their ministers for the service of God, in the gospel of his Son, and their desire to profit by his sudden and unexpected removal to the better country, as an excitement to follow his example in fulfilling the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus ; and to hold themselves in readiness for that change, by which, without any previous warning, their labours may be terminated."

The Synod, instead of immediately choosing a professor, to supply the place of Dr Dick, appointed a committee to consider " whether any or what improvements might be made in the present system of theological tuition ;" and the

students who had completed their two years' attendance in Dr Mitchell's class, were placed under the superintendence of the several presbyteries, who were required to assign them discourses, and to direct their studies, until another Professor should be chosen.

At a subsequent meeting, the committee on theological tuition presented a long report, in which it was recommended, that the course of study should be greatly enlarged, and that, for the future, there should be four, instead of two, Professors connected with the Theological Seminary. The report of the committee occasioned much discussion in the Synod, and a considerable diversity of opinion ; but, after being discussed at several meetings, it was finally adopted by a large majority. The following paragraph, extracted from it, contains an outline of the enlarged plan of study :—

“ Students, in addition to the course formerly prescribed, viz. instructions respecting the history, evidence, and interpretation of the holy Scriptures, and in systematic theology, shall have critically expounded to them, during their course of study, one or more of the principal books of the Old Testament, the gospel history, the Acts of the Apostles, one or more of the doctrinal epistles, and the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus ; that they shall not only be instructed in systematic theology, but have a detailed view given them of the divine dispensations, as these are developed in the holy Scriptures, on a plan similar to that of President Edwards' History of Redemption ; that the qualifications of the ministerial character, and the duties of the pastoral office, shall be fully explained to them ; that they shall be instructed in all the services which, as teachers or rulers in the christian church, they may be called on to perform, such as conducting the public devotions of the church, the composition and delivery of pulpit discourses, both lectures and sermons, ministerial visitation of families, public catechising, visitation of the sick, the government and discipline of the church, as administered in sessions, presbyteries, and synods ; that they shall be instructed in ecclesiastical history in general, and

especially in the history of the primitive church, and the history of the church in Britain, particularly the history of the Secession Church; and, finally, that they shall be made intimately acquainted with the Confession of Faith, and the Testimony of the United Secession Church."

This extended course was placed under the superintendence of four Professors, having the following designations:—  
1. A Professor of Biblical Literature. 2. A Professor of Exegetical Theology, or exposition of the holy Scriptures. 3. A Professor of Systematic Theology. 4. A Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ecclesiastical History.

In addition to Dr Mitchell, who already filled the chair of Biblical Literature, three new Professors were elected by the Synod, on the 13th of April, 1834. The persons who were elevated by the suffrages of their brethren, to this distinguished situation, were,—Dr John Brown, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, appointed Professor of Exegetical Theology; the Rev. Alexander Duncan, of Mid-Calder, elected Professor of Systematic Theology; and the Rev. Robert Balmer, of Berwick, who was appointed to fill the chair of Pastoral Theology. But, by a subsequent arrangement, sanctioned by the Synod, Messrs Duncan and Balmer exchanged Professorships. A small salary of £50 annually, was annexed to each of these appointments. This salary was not intended as a remuneration to the Professors for the time and labour spent by them in discharging the duties of their office, but was designed merely to defray necessary expenses. All the individuals who hold the office of Professor, in connexion with the United Associate Synod, may be considered as performing the arduous labours of it gratuitously, seeing that the small sum allowed for incidental expenses will be barely sufficient for the purpose. As the Divinity Hall meets every alternate year in Edinburgh and Glasgow, three of the Professors have always to leave their homes, and take up their abode in one or other of these towns, at least two months of the year, during the session of the Hall.



The curriculum of study prescribed to the students by the new arrangements, is five sessions, of eight weeks each, during the months of August and September ; and it is rendered imperative on every student to attend the whole time. Should any one leave the Hall, before the term of eight weeks is completed, it is not counted to him for a session, unless a satisfactory reason shall be given to the Synod, for a particular exception being made in his case. During the first two sessions of the course, the students attend the prelections of the Professors of Biblical and Exegetical Theology ; and, during the other three, they are under the superintendence of the Professors of Systematic and Pastoral Theology. During the long vacations which occur betwixt one session of the Hall and another, the students are under the inspection of the presbyteries within whose bounds they reside, who require them to deliver at least one discourse, at a meeting of presbytery, during the course of the year, who prescribe to them subjects connected with church history and divinity, on which they are carefully examined, and who keep strict watch over their general conduct.

Before any student can be admitted to the study of divinity, in connexion with the United Associate Synod, he must be a member in full communion with the Secession Church. He must produce evidence to the presbytery, that he has attended one of the Scotch universities for a period of at least three years, and must submit to an examination on the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages ; also concerning his knowledge of logic, moral philosophy, and natural philosophy. With regard to the last mentioned department (natural philosophy), there is an option given to the student to attend this class, either before he is admitted to the study of divinity, or immediately after his first session at the Hall. But, exclusive of his attendance upon the natural philosophy class, he must have attended, during the course of three sessions, at one of the universities. It is further required of him, that he satisfy the presbytery with regard to the purity of his motives in seeking to enter upon the work of the mi-

nistry ; and he is subjected to an examination on the subject of personal religion.

The statement now given concerning the course of study, prescribed by the United Secession Church to those who are aspiring to the office of the holy ministry, and concerning the strict attention paid by the ecclesiastical courts to the students at every period of their course, shows that, in so far as the object can be accomplished by means of human regulations, the Secession congregations have every reasonable ground to believe, that their spiritual interests will not be neglected, by being confided to the hands of men who are either incompetent for their work, or unworthy of their office. I know not any better security that can be given, than that which is afforded by the above enactments, for training up, under the blessing of heaven, a learned, a pious, and an efficient gospel ministry.

At the meeting of the United Synod, in the month of September 1833, a communication was read from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. This letter (dated Philadelphia, June 15, 1833) was heard with deep attention. It contained a most gratifying account of the rapid progress and flourishing condition of the Presbyterian Church in America. The following extract from it shows the expansive power which christianity possesses ; and how, from a small beginning in any country, it will gradually diffuse itself amid many obstacles, until the whole land shall be gladdened with its influence. The statements contained in this extract are highly encouraging to those who are engaged in missionary labours either at home or abroad. Let them not despair though the beginning may be small :—“ Less than three centuries since, the goodly land which has become our inheritance, was emphatically a dark and howling wilderness, which no glad tidings of salvation had ever reached, no ray from the sun of righteousness had ever penetrated. Now, it is planted, to a large extent, with christian churches, in the most of which, however differing in name, the essential

truths of divine revelation are taught and inculcated, and numerous hopeful converts are added unto the Lord. The church to which we belong, traces its formal organization to an association of not more than six ministers of the gospel, emigrants, with one exception only, from Scotland and Ireland, who, in the beginning of the last century (A. D. 1704), formed a presbytery, and held their first meeting for business in the city of Philadelphia. This church now embraces in its bosom ministers and members, whose locations are scattered over a region of country, extending from Canada on the north, to the Gulf of Mexico on the south; and from the Atlantic on the east, to the Missouri on the west. It numbers twenty-two synods, one hundred and eleven presbyteries, more than eighteen hundred ministers, twenty-five hundred churches, and more than two hundred and thirty-three thousand communicants. Thus our original presbytery has resembled the humble, but pure spring, from which some of our beautiful rivers take their rise, whose waters, penurious at first, run rapidly forward, and constantly increasing and widening, and deepening as they flow, refresh and fertilize every region through which they pass. Our first presbytery has, indeed, in its wonderful increase and extension, gladdened many a solitary place, and made the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

One of the objects, which the General Assembly of America had in view, in sending this letter to the United Associate Synod, was to request, that the Synod would co-operate with the Assembly, and with other religious communities, in setting apart the first Monday of January, in the ensuing year, as a season of special prayer and fasting, for the conversion of the world to Christ. The Synod entered most cordially into the views of their American brethren, in reference to this matter; and they gave a recommendation to all the congregations under their inspection, to set apart a portion of the first Monday of January for this purpose; "that on the same day the churches of the Secession in Britain may unite with the churches in America, and in other parts of



the world, in supplications to the God of all grace, that the Spirit may be poured out abundantly, and that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

At one of the sederunts of this meeting of Synod, the Rev. Dr Cox from New York, a member of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, was introduced to the court. The Synod gave him an affectionate welcome, and invited him to correspond. The Doctor made some interesting statements to the Synod, concerning the progress of religion in the States of America, and especially in the churches under the inspection of the General Assembly. The Synod, through the medium of their moderator, expressed to Dr Cox their gratitude for the communications that had been made to them, the interest which they felt in the prosperity of the religious community with which he was connected, and their sincere respect and affection for himself; after which some time was most pleasantly spent in prayer and praise. Dr Peddie commenced these exercises by offering up supplication. He was succeeded by Dr Cox; and then the whole audience united in singing the 133d Psalm. A committee was appointed to prepare an answer to the letter which had been received from the General Assembly of America.

Another communication, which was received at this meeting, and which afforded great pleasure to the brethren, was a letter from the Congregational Union of England and Wales. It was addressed to the moderator of the United Associate Synod, and was to the following effect:—

CONGREGATIONAL LIBRARY, *London, 4th June, 1833.*

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,—Annexed we beg leave to transmit to you, as moderator of the United Associate Synod, the seventh resolution of the last general meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, held here on the 10th of May, 1833.

"We take this opportunity of assuring you, dear Sir, and, through you, our beloved brethren of your communion, both in England and Scotland, that this overture proceeds from the most cordial wish to become more closely and more ostensibly united with you in christian bonds. The points of dissimilarity between our bodies are, we

trust, so few and unimportant, in comparison of the great terms of our agreement, that the proposed intercourse may be carried on, not only without any inconvenience, but with mutual comfort and advantage.

“ The minutes of our general meeting now sent, will inform you of our correspondence with our brethren of your order in the United States of America, and of the proposal for the interchange of delegates, from both sides of the Atlantic, in the ensuing spring. We persuade ourselves that this intelligence will be agreeable to yourself and your brethren in the ministry, with your whole body ; and we hope that we shall enjoy a similar gratification at our next general meeting, in receiving a delegation from the United Associate Synod.

“ If this proposal meet with acceptance, the committee of the Union would immediately nominate brethren with a view to the pleasing office of delegates to your next General Assembly.

“ We are delighted with the tokens of increasing unanimity and affection among the ministers and churches of Christ, of approximating denominations, and hail them as a gracious omen of the approaching period, when ‘ the watchmen on the walls of Zion shall see eye to eye,’ and the church of Christ, at large, be more entirely united in judgment and affection.

“ Requesting that you will have the kindness to make known this communication, in your official capacity, to your body, with respectful and affectionate good wishes, and with fervent prayer for your peace and prosperity, we are, Rev. and dear Sir, your faithful friends and fellow-servants in the gospel of Christ,

“ JOSEPH TURNBULL,	} <i>Secretaries.</i> ”
“ WILLIAM STERN PALMER,	
“ JOSHUA WILSON,	

The following is the “ seventh resolution ” referred to, in the above letter :—

“ Moved by the Rev. John Burnet, seconded by Samuel Newell, Esq. and resolved unanimously, That, as the Union is bound to fraternise with all denominations of christians, holding the faith of Christ in purity, and also avowing their belief in the unlawfulness of using the secular power in the kingdom of Christ ; and as the third object of the Union is, ‘ to establish fraternal correspondence with other bodies of christians throughout the world,’ it is with much pleasure

that the meeting is led to hope, that a communication may be formed with the United Associate Synod of Scotland; and that the Secretaries be requested to address a letter to the moderator of the Synod, proposing that an exchange of delegates take place at our annual meetings; for the purpose of promoting christian fellowship, and for advancing the interests of the kingdom of our Lord."

In the proposal made by the Congregational Union, the Synod most cordially acquiesced. An answer, subscribed by the moderator and clerk of the Synod, was immediately returned to the above communication, in which the writers say:—"We are authorised by the Synod of the United Secession Church to acknowledge the receipt of your friendly communication, and to state in reply, that the Synod enters cordially into the proposal of opening a correspondence with the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and will have much pleasure in receiving your deputation, and in sending deputies in return."

After giving some account of the Secession, and pointing out the advantages of union among christians, the Synod's answer concluded in the following terms:—"We cherish the hope that a better day has begun to dawn upon the christian world, and hail as one of the signs of this auspicious period, that tendency to approximate to one another, and to solicit an interchange of christian and friendly offices, which is at present manifested by various denominations. Truth is not less ardently loved, and not less clearly taught and maintained now than formerly; but a more correct estimate is formed of the relative importance of the various doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, and of that degree of uniformity in doctrine and order which is necessary to christian fellowship. United in sentiment as the Church of the Secession, and the Congregational Churches of England and Wales are, in regard to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, namely, the universal and total depravity of human nature—the divinity and atonement of the Son of God—justification by faith—the necessity of sanctification by the Spirit—the



certainty of a future judgment and of an everlasting state of retribution, we hold it to be not simply allowable, but an imperative duty to recognise this unanimity, and to hold it forth to public attention. By this means prejudices may be removed, brotherly love may be strengthened, and the leading principles of our holy faith drawn forth from those multiplied details by which they have been obscured rather than illustrated—entombed rather than defended, and inscribed, as it were, upon the banner of the cross, may be spread abroad to collect together all the genuine followers of the Redeemer. Differing as the churches of the Secession and the congregational churches do, respecting some points of order, it is neither expected nor desired that there should be concealment or compromise on either side; but they desire to obey the apostolic injunction, in the hope that they will experience the fulfilment of the promise connected with it:—‘If in any thing ye be variously minded, God will reveal even this unto you: nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.’”

In accordance with the resolution quoted above, the Rev. John Burnet of Camberwell, London, was sent as a delegate by the Congregational Union of England and Wales to the United Associate Synod, and was introduced to them at their meeting in April 1834. Mr Burnet addressed the Synod in a speech distinguished for its piety and good sense. A suitable reply was made by the moderator. Several members of court expressed their high satisfaction that a correspondence had been commenced in such auspicious circumstances, between the United Secession Church and the Congregational Union of England. Some time was then spent in praise and prayer. Appropriate Psalms were sung; and the Rev. John Jamieson of Scoon, and Mr Burnet, offered up devout supplication to God. Mr Burnet was requested by the Synod to favour the court with his presence, during their sittings at this meeting, to as great an extent as his time would permit, and to aid them with his counsel. The Synod appointed Drs Mitchell and Heugh of Glasgow, and Mr Andrew Mar-

shall, minister at Kirkintilloch, a deputation to attend the meeting of the Congregational Union, which was to be held in London, the following month. At the first meeting of Synod, held after the return of this deputation, Dr Heugh reported that Dr Mitchell and he had fulfilled the appointment of Synod, and had been received by their brethren of the Congregational Union in a respectful and affectionate manner. The Synod returned thanks to these brethren, “for the manner in which they had fulfilled the trust committed to them;” and they recorded anew their desire to cultivate a friendly intercourse with such a large and respectable body of christians as the Congregationalists of England.

On the 4th of April (1834), an overture from the presbytery of Dunfermline brought before the United Synod the subject of a union with the Relief Church. This overture proposed, “That the Synod shall take such steps as may be deemed necessary to begin and maintain a friendly intercourse with the Relief Synod, as a sister church, and that this overture shall lie on the table of the Synod till next meeting, in order that all parties concerned may be acquainted with it before it be discussed.” The Synod allowed the overture to lie upon their table. At their meeting in spring, the following year, they entered upon the consideration of it. A considerable number of members delivered their sentiments on the subject. Some were for appointing a committee to take steps for immediate union. Those who supported this motion were few. Others were of opinion, that the Synod should express a desire of union, and send a deputation to the Relief Synod as a token of brotherly regard. The general feeling of those, who spoke on the subject, was, that a union with the Relief Church, on scriptural terms, was in itself desirable; but that it would be proper to delay, at present, adopting any decisive measures for accomplishing this object. It was finally agreed to remit the overture “to the serious and prayerful consideration of sessions and presbyteries;” and the clerk was instructed to give notice of this resolution to the Relief Synod, “in a kind and respectful letter.” At

next meeting reports were received from four presbyteries. One of these was in favour of union ; the other three expressed themselves friendly to the object, but considered delay advisable. Petitions and memorials were at the same time presented from fourteen congregations and one session ; all of which, with one exception, were favourable to the proposed union. A communication was also read from the Relief Synod, which breathed an excellent spirit. After some deliberation, the United Synod agreed to renew their expression of esteem and affection for the Relief Church ; and gave an injunction to the presbyteries and sessions, to take the subject of a union “ into their deliberate and prayerful consideration,” and to report to the Synod at next meeting.

When the Synod met in April 1836, reports and petitions were presented from fifteen presbyteries, fifty-two sessions, and nine congregations. From the tenor of these papers it appeared, that a considerable diversity of opinion prevailed amongst both ministers and people. Some proposed that a union should be immediately accomplished, others that it should be delayed. As the Synod had not time to read the mass of papers that was laid upon their table, they appointed a committee to consider and classify them, and to report concerning the various opinions contained in them. This committee was also instructed to obtain authentic information concerning the principles and administration of the Relief Church. The report of the committee was to the following effect :—“ That they had considered and classified said reports and petitions, and that from these papers, and the information received in their meetings, they deem it their duty to state, that there does not appear to be that harmony of view and desire among our own congregations, on the subject of the union, which would justify the committee in recommending to the Synod the adoption of measures for its immediate consummation ; but they recommend to the Synod to express their ‘love in the truth,’ for their esteemed brethren of the Relief Church, and their pleasing conviction,



that there is so much coincidence in Scriptural view and feeling betwixt the two bodies, as to encourage the hope of a complete union, at no distant period, on grounds consonant with the word of God, and the comfort and edification of both churches." It was resolved, at this meeting, to appoint a deputation to wait upon the Relief Synod, who were expected to meet during the course of the ensuing month, and to communicate to them "the sentiments of fraternal christian affection which this church bears to the Relief Church, and our ardent desire for their spiritual prosperity." The persons appointed on this deputation were Drs Pringle, Peddie, Kidston, Ritchie, Professor Duncan, and Mr William M'Kelvie of Balgedie. Only three of these brethren had it in their power to fulfil their appointment.

Dr Peddie reported to the Synod, at the September meeting, that Dr Kidston, Dr Ritchie, and himself, had waited on the Relief Synod, and had been most kindly received. He introduced at the same time, a deputation of the Relief brethren, who had been appointed to wait upon the United Associate Synod. The deputation consisted of Messrs Mathew Alison of Kilbarchan (moderator of Relief Synod); Daniel Gorrie of Kettle; Alexander Harvey of Glasgow; Francis Muir of Leith; and James Smith Taylor of Coldstream. Dr Mitchell was requested by the moderator to open the conference with prayer, which was done along with the singing of Psalms. Mr Alison then rose and read an extract from the minutes of the Relief Synod, containing the following resolutions, which they had adopted at their last meeting:—

"I. That a union with the United Associate Church, on Scriptural grounds, and without merging the principle of the free-communion of saints, which has so long been a distinctive tenet of the Relief Synod, is greatly to be desired, and ought to be sought after with prudence, deliberation, and perseverance.

"II. That as some of the sessions, and it is believed congregations in the Synod, are not prepared for the contem-

plated union, it is necessary that proper means should be employed to remove objections to the proposal ; and for this purpose, it is especially desirable, that christian and ministerial intercourse, by interchange of pulpit services, and otherwise, should be cultivated between the two bodies, if it shall be found that such correspondence is not prohibited by the standards of the Secession Church.

“ III. That the Synod send a deputation of their number to the next meeting of the Synod of the United Associate Church, to express their high respect for that body, and their desire for its prosperity and welfare, and to make proffer of the intercourse referred to, as the most likely method of promoting mutual acquaintance, and removing prejudice, and thus of ultimately effecting an incorporated union.”

After reading these resolutions, Mr Alison made a few statements in support of them. Some of the other members of the deputation also addressed the Synod ; and the impression produced, by means of their speeches, upon members of court, was exceedingly favourable to the cause of union. A suitable reply was made, by the moderator, to the deputation ; and several members of Synod delivered their sentiments. At the close of the conference Mr Alison offered up prayer, at the request of the Synod, and a few verses of a Psalm were sung. The Synod delayed giving any decision concerning the proposal submitted to them, in the above resolutions, with regard to holding christian and ministerial intercourse with the brethren of the Relief Church ; but remitted the consideration of this business to the committee formerly appointed, who were required to report at next meeting.

The Synod received the report of this committee on the 12th of May, 1837. After receiving it, they did not consider it expedient to discuss the proposition of intermediate intercommunion, as they were of opinion that such discussion was not calculated, in present circumstances, to promote the object in view : but they appointed a committee “ to have a

free conversation with any committee that the Relief Synod may think fit to appoint, on the circumstances which make the proposed union between the churches desirable, the difficulties which lie in the way of effecting it, and the principles on which it must be based ; and to report the result of the conversation to the Synod." They enjoined their clerk to give immediate notice of this resolution to the moderator of the Relief Synod. A corresponding committee has been appointed by the Synod of Relief ; and a meeting of the committees of the two Synods was held in Glasgow, in the month of July 1838. As no meeting of the supreme courts has been held, since the united committees met, of course no official report has yet been given of their proceedings. But it is understood that the meeting in Glasgow was a most agreeable one, that both parties were unreserved in their communications with each other ; and that the whole of the deliberations were conducted in a spirit of great kindness and fidelity ; and there is little reason to doubt, that when the two committees report to their respective Synods the result of this conference, it will have a happy influence in accelerating the progress of a union, which the representatives of both churches have already declared to be highly desirable. What is there to prevent such an event from being now consummated ? The two churches are agreed on all the main points of doctrine, discipline, and government ; and should there be any diversities of administration, these can be made the subject, either of forbearance, or of future arrangement. The eventful nature of the times in which we live, and the extraordinary struggle at present carrying on betwixt state-endowed and unendowed churches, render it an imperative duty on those, who hold the same general views of ecclesiastical polity, to merge smaller differences, and to unite together for the purpose of giving more complete effect to the grand principle involved in the struggle, viz. *entire religious freedom*.

An important declaration was made by the United Synod, at their meeting in September 1836, on the spiritual relationship existing between minister and people, and on the nature



of that claim which the former has to receive stipend from the latter. Mr Arneil, who was for some time minister of the Secession congregation in Portobello, and whom unfavourable circumstances had obliged to demit his charge, raised a process before the Court of Session against certain persons, who were alleged to be members of his congregation, for arrears of stipend. The Edinburgh presbytery, to whom the individuals who were prosecuted applied for protection, brought the matter before the supreme court, requesting them to give to these persons advice and assistance, and also to issue a declaration, “as to the claim which the ministers of the Secession Church have to their stipend.” The following is the deliverance which the Synod gave on this subject:—

“After deliberation, the Synod agreed to state, that as in the compact between every minister of this church, and his people, it is assumed that he is wholly devoted to the duties of his office, so a suitable maintenance from his people is obviously a dictate of justice, and is acknowledged, in the call which he receives, to be an imperative christian duty; that the word of God, which is the only authority and law as to the support of ministers of the gospel, distinctly embodies and enforces this principle; that the above principle not only pervades the word of God, but is exhibited in the form of an express commandment, ‘Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things;’ that there can be no appeal in any thing connected with the support of christian ministers, excepting to the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking in the word of God, and giving his sanction to, and prescribing the arrangements of the church in this matter; and that from the beginning, the practice of those portions of the Secession Church, of which the United Associate Synod is composed, has been in uniform accordance with these statements. Agreeably to these views, the Synod hereby declares that every minister ordained to the pastoral office in this church, binds and obliges himself to submit, in the matter of temporal support, as well as in all other matters connected with his office, to the decision of

those spiritual overseers to whom he has promised subjection in the Lord, and disclaims all right to prosecute for stipend, in courts of civil law, acknowledging that the high and sacred claim which Christ has given him on the conscience of his people, is a security which he feels to be perfectly adequate. In emitting this declaration, the Synod is to be understood as simply giving expression to the consuetudinary law of our church, and feels assured, that so far from weakening, this declaration will strengthen and consolidate the hold which her ministers already have on the conscience, and the affection, and the liberality of their flocks."

Some enactments have of late been made by the United Synod, affecting, to a certain extent, the power and constitution of the ecclesiastical judicatories of the associated body. One of these refers to the mode of deciding in the case of competing or transporting calls. For a hundred years after the commencement of the Secession, the law and practice of the Secession judicatories were, that when a preacher received a call from two or more congregations, the competition was decided (after the hearing of parties) by the supreme court, to whose decision the matter was ordinarily referred by the presbyteries, within whose bounds the competing congregations were situated; and the preacher was bound to submit to the judgment of the Synod, whether it accorded with his own inclination or not. The same authoritative mode of procedure was observed in the case of a transporting call given to an ordained minister. It belonged to the supreme court to judge and determine whether he should be continued in his present charge, or be removed, in accordance with the call thus given, to a new scene of labour. By an enactment of the Synod, in September 1833, this power of deciding in the cases referred to, has been voluntarily renounced; and it is now declared to be the law of the United Associate Synod, "That, in the case of a transporting call, or of competing calls, the decision shall, in the first instance, be left to the individual who has received such call or calls; but that should he, or any of the parties

interested in the case, desire to have the advice and judgment of the church courts in the matter, it shall be competent to bring it before them in the usual way." This enactment was opposed by a considerable portion of the Synod, on the ground of its being an infringement of the presbyterian order recognized by the Secession Church, and also on the ground of its holding out a temptation to underhand dealing, in the way of private negotiation between parties, in the giving and receiving of calls. But the opposition was unavailing. Several ministers recorded their dissent from the deed of Synod sanctioning the above alteration. A committee was appointed to prepare regulations, which might serve as a directory to church courts, in all cases of competing and transporting calls that might come before them; and with the special view of preventing abuses from being committed under covert of the new law. The committee executed the task assigned them. They laid upon the Synod's table a set of regulations, apparently well adapted for the purpose. The Synod ordered them to be printed, but have not yet given them a formal sanction.

Another enactment, of the description above referred to, is one which was carried amid much opposition at the meeting of Synod in September 1837. At an early period of the Secession, the question was discussed in the church courts, Whether lay elders from vacant congregations ought to have a seat in the superior ecclesiastical judicatories, such as presbyteries and synods? And it was determined by the Fathers of the Secession, that they ought not, as they judged it inconsistent with presbyterian parity, that there should be more lay elders than ministers in these courts of review. The same question was brought forward and discussed repeatedly, at later periods, and uniformly with the same result, till the meeting of Synod now mentioned; when it was declared, by a decided majority, that elders from the sessions of congregations, where there is no fixed teacher, shall be "allowed a seat in presbytery and synod." Let the number of *teaching* elders be diminished, at any time, to the lowest



possible amount, in any of the judicatories, by deaths and removals, this enactment secures a regular and permanent supply of *lay* elders for the conducting of business. According to this new enactment, the *lay* representative of a session belonging to the United Secession Church, resembles the monarch of the British Empire: *he never dies*.

In the course of this narrative, numerous and gratifying proofs have been given of the spirit of missionary enterprise, which has characterised the Secession, as a church, in all the periods of her history, and which has imparted vitality and power to her operations. While her ministers and congregations were comparatively few in number, she not only carried the light of the gospel, by means of her preachers, into many a dark corner of our own land, but she sent labourers to the benighted districts of Ireland, to Nova Scotia, to Canada, and to the then thinly-peopled wilds of America. By her instrumentality, churches have been planted in these distant regions, and multitudes have heard the joyful sound of salvation, who might otherwise have lived and died in a state of spiritual destitution. All this she accomplished by the free-will offerings of her people, who, though the greater part of them were in an humble station of life, contributed cheerfully of their scanty earnings, that they might spread abroad the glories of their Redeemer's name in foreign lands.

During the last ten years, a new and a powerful impulse has been given to the missionary spirit of the United Secession Church. She has organized, and is carrying on with considerable vigour, a scheme of operation much more systematic and extensive, than she has done at any former period of her history; and, if we may judge from the regular increase of her missionary fund, and from the number of labourers whom she is sending forth, her exertions are every year augmenting. In the month of April, 1829, the United Synod resolved on pursuing "a more extended course of missionary exertions for the propagation of the gospel in the more destitute parts of our country;" and the following

scheme of home missions was adopted:—"That the preachers employed in the home missionary stations shall be appointed to the different presbyteries by the sub-committee on missions, from among the preachers, who, for the time being, have no synodical appointments; that these preachers shall, as much as possible, be stationary in the preaching stations during the time they are employed; that, while thus employed, they shall receive the sum of fifteen shillings\* of stipend for each Sabbath, exclusive of board, which the presbyteries shall endeavour to provide; and that, during their residence in these stations, they shall, besides a regular ministration of the gospel on Sabbaths, occupy themselves as much as possible in all proper efforts to promote and extend the interests of religion, especially by communicating religious instruction to the young, visiting the sick, and teaching privately, as prudence dictates. The Synod further enjoined the presbyteries, within whose bounds these preaching stations are, to watch over them with care, and particularly to appoint such members as shall be contiguous, to visit them frequently; that they shall endeavour to procure as large contributions as possible from the stations themselves, for the support of the gospel, that the labours of the preachers thus afforded may be the longer continued; and that each presbytery shall make a report to the Synod concerning these stations, of the money collected by them, the money expended, and their apparent success." It was afterwards resolved, that a missionary committee shall be annually appointed, by whom all missionary business shall be conducted, and who shall prepare, for publication, an annual report of their proceedings; that missionary operations shall be extended, according to the state of the funds, and the applications from presbyteries; that every missionary station, when formed into a congregation, shall no longer be considered as connected with the committee on missions, but shall be treated by the presbytery of the bounds in the same

\* This sum has since been raised to the ordinary weekly allowance for preachers—one guinea.

manner with other vacancies ; and that each probationer shall keep a journal of his proceedings in the missionary stations, which he shall submit to the committee on missions, in sufficient time to be considered by them, before making up their report.

On the 13th of September, 1831, the Synod resolved to enter on a foreign mission, and they appointed the missionary committee to ascertain what might be the most eligible field of labour. A variety of circumstances pointed to Canada, and the adjoining provinces of British America, as presenting a promising field of usefulness ; and, after mature deliberation, the Synod unanimously resolved to send, without delay, three or four missionaries to labour in that quarter of the world. Their committee was instructed to look out for suitable persons to undertake this mission. Three members of Synod, every way qualified for the work, immediately volunteered their services to go as missionaries to Canada : these were—Messrs Thomas Christie, minister of Holme in Orkney ; William Proudfoot, minister at Pitrodie in Carse of Gowrie ; and William Robertson, minister in Cupar of Fife. Having resigned their charges in this country, they sailed for their destination in the month of July 1832. Mr Robertson died of cholera, at Montreal, about a month after his arrival. These were followed, in the spring of the following year, by Mr William Taylor, who was for some time minister at Peebles, and Messrs George Murray and Robert Thornton, both of whom were ordained in this country, with a special view to the Canadian mission. Two additional labourers were sent to Canada in 1834 ; namely, Messrs James Skinner and John Cassie. At the meeting of the Synod in April, it was resolved, that the brethren who had been sent as missionaries to Canada, should be erected into a presbytery, under the designation of *The Missionary Presbytery of the Canadas, in connexion with the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church in Scotland* ; and it was resolved, at the same time, to send catechists and Gaelic preachers to that country.



On the 1st of August, 1834, slavery was declared, by an act of the British legislature, to be abolished in the West India Islands; and the Synod considered that a fair opening was now presented to them for commencing missionary operations in some of these islands. At their meeting in September, they directed their committee to take immediate measures for sending two or more missionaries to Jamaica; and they gave their sanction to the following proposal, which was submitted to them by some of the brethren, who were anxious to encourage a missionary spirit in their congregations:—"That congregations shall be allowed to support missionaries, by distinct funds, under the superintendence of the Synod, with the understanding that they may present suggestions regarding the selection of agents and spheres of operation, and be permitted to maintain direct correspondence with the agents; these suggestions to be submitted to the committee on missions, for their consideration, and in the regular form brought before the Synod."

During the year 1835, four missionaries in connexion with the United Secession Church, sailed for the West Indies; three of whom commenced labouring in the island of Jamaica, and the fourth in Trinidad. The three that went to Jamaica, were Mr James Paterson (who was for some time minister at Auchtergaven, in this country), Mr William Niven, and Mr Peter Anderson. Mr Paterson is supported by the Broughton Place congregation, Edinburgh; Mr Niven, by the presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk; and Mr Anderson, by the Regent Place congregation, Glasgow. The missionary who is stationed in Trinidad, is Mr Alexander Kennedy, who is supported by the Greyfriars congregation, Glasgow. The same year, two Nova Scotian preachers (Messrs Fraser and M'Kenzie), who were acquainted with the Gælic language, were added to the mission in Canada.

Toward the close of 1836, and in the beginning of 1837, the hands of the brethren in Jamaica were strengthened by the accession of two new missionaries, who were sent from this country, Messrs William Jamieson and James Niven. Mr

Jamieson was sent out, and is maintained by the Rose Street congregation, Edinburgh. Two additional labourers, Messrs James Roy and George Lawrence, were also sent, during the last mentioned year, to Canada. The Rev. William Glen, an excellent Persian scholar, who was for some time a minister of the Secession in Annan, and latterly in the employment of the Scottish Missionary Society, and of the British and Foreign Bible Society at Astracan, has lately left this country, as an agent of the United Associate Synod, for Tabreez, in Persia, where he is to be employed in the important work of translating the Old Testament into the Persian language. A few of the congregations have it in contemplation to maintain a mission in some of the South Sea Islands. With a view to this, they have raised the sum of £300, and placed it at the disposal of the Rev. John Williams, the South Sea missionary, in connexion with the London Society, to defray the expense of an exploratory voyage, which he has engaged to undertake. “Mr Williams is to endeavour to ascertain the character and habits of the islands visited, together with the facilities existing for the introduction of the gospel among them. He is to carry with him eight or ten native missionaries from the islands already evangelized, and place them in the scene selected for the new mission, as pioneers to the ministers who may be sent out from the Secession Church; and he is then to communicate to the missionary committee an account of the voyage, and of the prospects which it may have opened up, that it may be considered whether the plan should be prosecuted.” In addition to the above-mentioned missionaries, Mr John Aird was sent as a catechist to Jamaica in 1837; and, in the following year, other four persons were sent in the same capacity to labour among the negro population of that island, namely, Messrs William Kay, James Elmslie, Davidson Black, and David Moir.

During last summer (1838), Mr John Monnard, a native of Geneva, after completing a course of study at the University of Edinburgh, and the Divinity Hall of the Secession Church, was ordained by the United Associate presbytery of

Edinburgh, and sent by the missionary committee of the United Synod to France, to be employed in that country, as a preacher of the gospel, in connexion with the United Secession Church. Those who were acquainted with his character and talents, considered him as eminently fitted for the work of an evangelist in France. He arrived in that country in the month of July, and only a few weeks elapsed, after his arrival, when he was consigned to an early tomb. He died on the 3d of August, at Vadencourt, near Amiens. Another agent for the continent of Europe has lately been engaged by the committee—the Rev. Charles F. Major, an evangelical dissenting minister, at present labouring in the city of Strasburg. The formal accession of this person to the principles of the United Secession Church, has been lately received. Mr Major's declaration of adherence is such a gratifying document, that I cheerfully give it a place in this record:—

“ I hereby do declare, that, after a conscientious examination of the ‘ Testimony of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland,’ I have found the leading doctrines and practices therein defended in harmony with the holy word of God, and with what I have been accustomed to consider as the pure faith of the protestant church. I do, therefore, find no scruple in my conscience solemnly to profess, that the doctrine I have been accustomed to preach, and the views I have held on church government, are the same as those of the United Secession Church of Scotland.

“ This being the case, I have considered it my duty to accept from the great Head of the church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as a benefit by him, bestowed upon my solitary labours of love, the proposal that has been made, from henceforward to be considered and treated as a minister in connexion with the Synod; and, after having been officially recognized by the Synod's presbytery of London, I cordially accept the proposal of the Synod's committee for foreign missions to act as their missionary on the continent, hoping and praying that the christian zeal and charity



which has led to this union, may be beneficial to the church of Christ in general, by making Christ crucified known the more and more amongst the people of the continent.

“ C. F. MAJOR, V. D. M.

“ STRASBURG, *November 23, 1838.*”

In the month of September last year, Mr William Scott was ordained by the presbytery of Dunfermline, with a view to his being employed as a missionary in Jamaica. The congregations belonging to the presbytery now mentioned, have engaged to raise the funds necessary for his support ; and he goes forth to that field of labour, as the presbytery's missionary. The Secession has lately obtained a footing in the Shetland Isles. During the years 1836-7, these islands were visited by ministers from the United Associate Synod ; and, during last year, a congregation was formed in the town of Lerwick, in connexion with the United Secession Church. A place of worship also has been erected, chiefly by funds collected from the congregations under the inspection of the Synod. It is expected that, ere long, other preaching stations will be occupied by Secession labourers in these islands.

Such is an outline of the missionary exertions which have been made by the United Associate Synod, during the last ten years. The following is the result of these exertions, as stated in the last Annual Report (for 1837), published by the Synod's committee. There are fifty home missionary stations, a considerable proportion of which receive a weekly supply of sermon, by means of the Synod's preachers ; and others of them have preachers sent to them at more distant intervals. The greater part of the expense necessary for the maintenance of these stations, is defrayed from the Synod Mission Fund ; and, in several instances, it is generously defrayed by the liberality of particular congregations taking upon them the whole charge of one or more stations. “ It is pleasing (says the Report) to know, that no small proportion of the stations may be regarded as flourishing ; that the

numbers in attendance at them, though exceedingly varied, are in many instances considerable, varying from one to three hundred; that some of them can tell of augmented strength during the past year; that classes, prayer-meetings, &c. are being multiplied; and that occasional examples of striking conversion, bespeak the presence and operation of the Spirit."

Besides the home stations, there are eleven missionaries in Canada; six in Jamaica (including Mr Scott, lately sent by the Dunfermline presbytery); one in Trinidad; also the continental agent, Mr Major; and the Persian agent, Mr Glen, employed in the translation of the Scriptures.

It will be gratifying to my readers to mark the progress of the missionary spirit in the Secession congregations, by the gradual increase of the mission fund, during the successive years that have elapsed since the new scheme of missionary operations was adopted. The following are the sums that have been collected during these years, according to the statements published by the treasurer in the Annual Reports:—

1829,	.	.	.	.	£60 10 11 $\frac{1}{2}$
1830,	.	.	.	.	739 11 6 $\frac{1}{2}$
1831,	.	.	.	.	928 11 1
1832,	.	.	.	.	1265 19 10 $\frac{3}{4}$
1833,	.	.	.	.	1366 0 3 $\frac{3}{4}$
1834,	.	.	.	.	1407 19 5
1835,	.	.	.	.	1673 1 3
1836,	.	.	.	.	3537 3 1 $\frac{1}{2}$
1837,	.	.	.	.	4526 12 8 $\frac{1}{2}$
1838,	.	.	.	.	*

The small sum that stands at the head of this list, must not be understood to constitute the whole amount that was collected, during that year, by the United Secession Church for missions. Many of its congregations were giving liberally, every year, for a considerable period, previous to the

\* I am unable to give the sum for this year, as no report has yet been published, and the treasurer's accounts were not closed at the usual time, there being no autumnal meeting of Synod last year. But there is good ground to believe that the amount of the mission fund for 1838, will at least not fall short of, if it do not exceed, that of the preceding year.

first date above mentioned, for the support of missions in connexion with other denominations. But the above sum constituted the commencement of the fund for Secession missions; and it is pleasing to observe, that the sum is steadily increasing every year, though there are many of the congregations that still give liberally for the support of missions connected with other religious societies. It is proper also to add, that the sums above stated do not include the whole that is annually collected for Secession missions; for there are several congregations, both in Edinburgh and Glasgow, that support, by their individual efforts, home and foreign missionaries and catechists, whose funds, expended on these objects, do not pass through the hand of the Synod treasurer, and of course do not appear in the published accounts. It is not overrating the sum so generously expended by those congregations, if we shall compute it to amount to £1000.

Besides these pecuniary exertions made by the United Secession Church, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, at home and abroad, a spirit of prayer has also been poured down, of late years, to a considerable extent upon her congregations; so that there are comparatively few of the congregations where there are not either weekly or monthly congregational meetings established for prayer, and the reading of religious intelligence, besides district societies in many of the congregations, for prayer and religious conference. All these things are to be regarded as tokens for good; and they are here recorded, not as reasons for boasting, but as causes of thanksgiving. While we ought to feel grateful for the good that is doing, we should blush that so little is done. There is much room left for improvement. We are as yet but in the commencement of the work. The field before us is the world lying in wickedness. Let none rest satisfied until gospel labourers shall be seen cultivating every portion of this field; and let all take encouragement from the promise given, that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."



## CHAPTER XII.

Voluntary church controversy. Rev. Dr Chalmers' description of it. Statement of the question. Misrepresentations corrected. Rev. A. Marshall's sermon. Reviewed in Edinburgh Christian Instructor. Mr Marshall's letter to the Rev. Dr Thomson. Reviewer's Reply. "Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered" by Mr Marshall. Powerful impression produced by Mr Marshall's publications. Voluntary Church Association formed in Edinburgh. Mr A. C. Dick's speech. Extracts from it. Voluntary Church Association formed in Glasgow. Similar associations formed over the country. Voluntary Church Magazine. Voluntary church motion in House of Commons. Motion negatived. Extensive diffusion of voluntary church principles. Associations formed for support of national church. Glasgow association. Church of Scotland Magazine. Vindication of Establishments by Dr Inglis. Reply by Mr Marshall. Proceedings of General Assembly. Veto Act. Regulations with regard to calls. Veto Act condemned by Anti-patronage Society. Dr M'Crie's opinion concerning it. Auchtermorder Case. Illegality of Veto Act declared by Court of Session. Case appealed to House of Lords. Lethendy Case. Church extension scheme. Demand for new endowments. Remarkable discovery of the church-extensionists. Petitions for endowments. Counterpetitions by dissenters. "Scottish Central Board" formed. Activity of the Board. United Associate Synod petition against endowments. Send a deputation to London. "Case of dissenters" prepared by deputation. Sent to Members of Parliament. Royal commission appointed. Appointment not agreeable to church-men nor dissenters. Condemnatory resolution by Commission of Assembly. Resolution respecting instructions to Commissioners. Resolutions by United Associate Synod. Lord John Russell's letter to United Synod. Extraordinary meeting of Synod. Agree to send a second deputation to London. Great meeting in London. Deputation visit towns in England. Proposed plan of minister

with regard to endowments. Plan condemned by General Assembly. Plan not carried into effect. Charges against dissenters by church-extensionists. Dissenters vindicated. Views of United Secession Church concerning Establishments. Results of voluntary church controversy. Concluding remarks.

IN this chapter I propose giving some account of a controversy, which is at present exciting a high degree of attention in this country, and in which the Secession Church has acted, and is still acting, a prominent and decided part. The controversy to which I refer, is that which has been carrying on for several years, with regard to the connexion between Church and State ; or, as it is most frequently termed, the *Voluntary-church controversy*. It had but a small beginning. When it first arose, it appeared like the cloud which the prophet's servant, on Mount Carmel, beheld rising out of the sea, no bigger than a man's hand. Many professed to regard it with a feeling of contempt ; and anticipated that it would speedily pass away. But it has increased and spread to such a degree, that the whole heavens have now become covered with its portentous gloom. There is not a town, probably not a village, in Scotland, where the sound of this controversy has not been heard. It is undergoing a thorough discussion from the platform, the pulpit, and the press. While it has become the familiar and almost daily topic of household conversation among the Scottish peasantry and mechanics, it is making its way with resistless force even among the uneducated masses of England. Almost all the churches in this country are ranging themselves openly and firmly either on the one side or the other. The question, which this controversy involves in it, has been the subject of grave deliberation in the cabinet. It decides, to a great extent, the fate of parliamentary and municipal elections ; and the whole of society, civil and ecclesiastical, has begun to heave, from its deepest foundations, with its volcanic energy.

One of the most popular and enthusiastic (I cannot add, most convincing) writers, in defence of national establish-

ments of religion, expresses himself in very contemptuous language, concerning this great question ; when characterising the controversy at present carrying on, he stigmatises it, in one of his eloquent declamations, as “ the wretched controversy of the present day.”\* Such language as this, is, in the present instance, exceedingly misapplied. However well fitted it may be to express the contempt, which the writer of it feels for the talents, and conduct, and motives of those who are opposed to him on this question, it by no means gives a just description of the controversy itself. In every point of view in which it can be contemplated, the controversy is one of no ordinary importance. The question, which it involves, not only furnishes a fair and legitimate subject of discussion in itself, but is intimately connected with the civil and religious prosperity of our country.

The question presents itself in two different aspects, both of which are highly important. One of these aspects is political or national. Viewed in this light, the point to be determined is, what is the cheapest, speediest, and most efficient mode of instructing the various classes of the community in the knowledge of christianity, and thereby rendering them individually good members of society. Is it by means of a class of teachers, supported by the funds of the state, and favoured with the enjoyment of exclusive privileges ? Or, is it by leaving christianity to make its way by means of its own free and unfettered energies, amongst the different sections of the community, without any special patronage or support on the part of those in power, except protection extended equally and impartially to all ? In determining such a point as this, every member of the community is entitled both to form and to express a judgment. And should the sentiments of any individual differ from those which, for the time, may have the ascendancy, it is unreasonable to subject him to abuse for giving utterance to them, so long as he does so in a calm and christian manner.

\* Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches. By Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D. P. 45.



But there are other points, of at least equal importance with the one now mentioned, involved in the political view of the question ; such as, Is it competent for the civil magistrate to interfere (in his magisterial character) in matters of religion at all ? Ought he to have the power of determining what particular form of a religious profession shall be embraced by the community over which he bears rule ? Or, must every individual member of the community have the power of determining this for himself ? Can he select and endow any particular denomination, without being guilty of injustice to those who do not belong to the favoured sect, and without destroying that equality of privilege which every good citizen is entitled to enjoy ? These are points which not only deserve, but demand, consideration ; and those persons who give them a calm and dispassionate discussion, render essential service to the cause of christianity. When they spend their time and their talents in endeavouring to convey to their fellow men correct notions on such points, they are labouring to promote the best interests of their species.

Another of the aspects, in which the question presents itself, is the religious or scriptural view of it. Viewed in this light, the point to be determined is, what is the particular rule laid down in the word of God, which we are required to follow, in propagating and maintaining christianity. Has the Author of the gospel left it to the judgment of men, to adopt such means as to them may seem fittest for introducing and upholding in any country the christian institutions ? Or, has he issued an authoritative law upon the subject, and prohibited men from employing any other means, in christianising the world, than those which he has been pleased to prescribe ? If there be a portion of the community, who, after mature deliberation, have adopted this latter view of the question, and who feel themselves called upon, by an imperative sense of duty, to maintain it in the face of all opposition, and to inculcate it upon their fellow-men with the view of producing conviction in their mind, is there any

thing wrong or disgraceful in such conduct? Ought they, when they bring the subject to be tried by the tests of reason and of Scripture, to be treated with contumely and contempt, merely because they venture to express sentiments which are opposed to the existing order of things? Are they not rather entitled to be listened to, with respect, on account of the honesty which they manifest, in fearlessly asserting their opinions, when they know them to be unpalatable to those whom it might be for their advantage to please?

Assuredly, that controversy cannot be a "wretched" one, which has for its object the determining of such important points, as those which have now been adverted to. These points are of vast magnitude, whether they be viewed in relation to the nation's welfare or the prosperity of the church; and a fair and dispassionate discussion of them cannot but be productive of great advantage to the community, even though it may at present be accompanied with many heart-burnings and temporary inconveniences. These will in due time pass away. Men, whose minds are now fretted and soured at each other, on account of having their views opposed and their schemes thwarted, will, after the heat of the combat is over, regain their wonted complacency. Truth will gain by the discussion. Future generations will look back upon the present struggle, with a feeling of wonder at the keenness of the animosity, which it has excited; and while enjoying the benefits that are destined to result from it, they will do justice to the combatants who are now engaged, by assigning to them that measure of censure or of approbation which their conduct may deserve.

It is proper that I should here take notice of the misrepresentation, which has been given, of the object which the advocates of voluntary churches have in view, and of the abusive language which has been so liberally applied to them, in connexion with this misrepresentation. Those who are opposed to their views are accustomed to write and speak concerning them, as if they were *destructives* in the literal

sense of the term ; and when describing their aims, they make use of language fitted to convey this impression to the mind, that their real, if not their avowed object, is to pull down the places of worship, and scatter the congregations in connexion with the Establishment, and to destroy the sacred institutions even of christianity itself. Whether the persons, who employ this language, really believe, that such is the atrocious design which those, who contend for voluntary churches, aim at accomplishing, I shall not presume to affirm ; but such, assuredly, is the impression which their language is fitted to produce on the mind of any ordinary reader. Is it not, for instance, a common classification, to be found in newspaper articles, and pamphlets, and speeches, which are written and spoken on one side of the question, to rank “ voluntaries ” along with “ papists and infidels,” as if they were a set of men equally opposed to purity of doctrine as the former of these classes, and equally desirous to subvert christianity as the latter. What can be the meaning of the incessant repetition of this obnoxious classification, if it be not for the purpose of holding up voluntary church-men to the odium of the country, by representing them as engaged, along with these two classes, in a destructive crusade against the protestant faith, and against the christian religion. This mode of conducting the controversy is unfair ; it is altogether unworthy of enlightened and honourable men. It is a mean and ungenerous attempt to demolish an adversary, not by argument, but by an appeal to ignorance and prejudice.

I know of no connexion which the present controversy necessarily has either with popery or infidelity. What the supporters of voluntary churches plead for, is that christianity shall be left to maintain and propagate itself in the world, through the medium of the unconstrained exertions of those who believe it, accompanied by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit ; exactly in the same way as it did, during the first three centuries, before any civil establishment of religion existed. This is what is meant by the separation of church and state, which they are desirous to



accomplish. This is what is meant, in common language, by "the destruction of the Establishment." It is not the destruction of the protestant faith, much less the subversion of christianity; but it is dissolving the connexion which at present exists, in this and other countries, between the state and the christian religion; so that the latter, instead of being upheld and propagated by means of legislative enactments, shall be left entirely free from all state interference. This is the very marrow, the sum and substance of the question (whatever subordinate points may be connected with it), which is at present undergoing a searching investigation before the tribunal of the public. I ask, what connexion has this question with popery or infidelity, so that voluntaries should be almost uniformly classed with papists and infidels? I repeat, that it has no necessary connexion either with the one or with the other. It is possible that papists and infidels may approve of dissolving the connexion between church and state, and may plead for the dissolution. They have exactly the same right to do so, that any other class of the community have. But it is at least equally possible, that they may be opposed to the dissolving of the connexion; and I believe that, in point of fact, a much greater number of papists and infidels will be found approving of the connexion than opposed to it. I should not, however, on that account think myself warranted in identifying the supporters of Establishments with papists and infidels, as if there was a necessary connexion between the former and the latter. It can be regarded, then, in no other light than a species of calumny, to place voluntaries in the same category with papists and infidels. There would be as much truth, and equal propriety, in classing them with Mohammedans and Hindoos.

The misrepresentations which have called forth these remarks, have not been confined to the obscure columns of newspapers, or to the ephemeral speeches of platform orators. They have been authoritatively delivered, as if they were the very gospel, from the professorial chair. They have

been reiterated, in a variety of figures of speech, by one of the most distinguished ministers of the Established Church, in lectures which he has delivered to admiring audiences, both in the northern and the southern metropolis; and which, being lately published in a cheap form, have been scattered in thousands over the land. This writer styles the attempt which is now making to dissolve the connexion between the church and the state, “a machine-breaking reformation;” and he sneeringly calls the persons who are engaged in making this attempt, “the machine-breaking reformers of the present day,” who, in the exuberance of his charity, he avers are “far more mischievous in their higher walk, but hardly more intelligent, be they in or out of parliament, than the machine-breakers of Kent, the frame-breakers of Leicestershire, or the incendiaries of a few years back, in the southern and midland counties of England.” He further says of these “machine-breaking reformers,”—“They would suppress parishes, or, by at least a partial destruction, keep back the water of life from certain parts of the territory.” He adds, “The days were, when ‘a man was famous, according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees, or according as he gave of materials or money for the building and the endowment of churches. But now they would break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. They have said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they would burn up all the synagogues of God in the land.’” As if this language were not sufficient to fix the stamp of reprobation on the “machine-breaking reformers,” he speaks of them in still plainer and stronger terms, when he describes them as “those impetuous and bustling agitators, in whose breasts politics have engrossed the place of piety, resolved at all hazards upon change, and prepared to welcome, with shouts of exultation, the overthrow of those altars which, in holier and better times, upheld the faith and devotion of our forefathers.”\* It is impossible to read, without a feeling of

\* Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National Churches. By the Rev. Dr Chalmers. Pp. 11, 13, 14.

indignation, such reckless and inflammatory, as well as unfounded, language applied to good men, who (admitting that they may be mistaken with regard to the mode by which they endeavour to accomplish their object), instead of aiming at the subversion of religion, or seeking to overturn any one altar that has been erected in honour of Christ, are labouring to extend his kingdom, and to diffuse amongst their fellow men, correct notions of its spirituality and its power.

While I have thus animadverted on the attempts that have been made to prejudice the public mind against the advocates of voluntary churches, by misrepresenting the object which they have in view, and by imputing to them designs which they disown, a regard to truth obliges me to admit, on the other hand, that abusive language has, in too many instances, been employed, in the course of this controversy, concerning those who have considered it their duty to declare themselves in favour of national establishments of religion. Language of this description is altogether unbecoming such an important discussion as that which is now under review. The use of it can have no other effect, than that of irritating the persons to whom it is applied. It ought not to be doubted, that there is a large class in our country, containing in it many men of great worth, and of high religious and literary attainments, who are conscientiously attached to national establishments of religion, firmly believing that they are necessary to the comfortable maintenance, and the successful propagation, of christianity. Let those who differ from them, on this point, endeavour to reach conviction to their mind, by every rational and scriptural argument; but let them carefully avoid all approach to scurrility or abuse. The battle must be fought, and the victory won, by making use of better tempered and more efficient weapons than these.

The question concerning ecclesiastical establishments is not new in this country. It has frequently been made the subject of discussion. Opposite views of it have been main-



tained by men distinguished for their talents and their learning. I am not aware, however, that it has ever occupied such a prominent place in the public mind, or excited such an extraordinary ferment among all classes, as it is doing at the present moment. It is not my intention to go farther back, in the review of this question, than the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, which is now agitating the empire.

The publication of a sermon, in May 1829, by Mr Andrew Marshall, minister of the United Secession Church in Kirkintilloch, may be considered as the commencement of this controversy.\* This sermon was preached by him, in Greyfriars Church, Glasgow, on the evening of Thursday, the 9th of April, before "The Glasgow Association for propagating the gospel in connexion with the United Secession Church," and was immediately given to the public, under the title of *Ecclesiastical Establishments considered*. The text of it is, Psalm lxxiv. 20, "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty;" and the discourse itself consists of a series of propositions, briefly but forcibly illustrated, the object of which is to show, that religious establishments are unscriptural, unjust, impolitic, secularizing in their tendency, inefficient, and unnecessary. As the sermon, when preached, rivetted the attention of the audience; so, when published, it produced an instantaneous and powerful impression. So eager and extensive were the demands for it, that it passed, in rapid succession, through several editions. The public mind was in a state highly favourable for receiving such a publication. The discussions concerning the Catholic Relief Bill, which had newly been passed, had produced a high degree of political excitement. Some were rejoicing in the progress which liberal principles were making in high places; others were

\* I am aware, that the Rev. J. Ballantyne's (of Stonehaven) "Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches," was published some short while before this. But Mr Ballantyne's book, at its *first* publication, produced little or no impression.

trembling lest, owing to the admission of Roman Catholics into parliament, popery would again acquire an ascendancy. In the "Advertisement" prefixed to his sermon, Mr Marshall stated it to be probable, that the Roman Catholics, having obtained emancipation, might ere long claim a civil establishment in Ireland; and he did not see how, on the principles of those who vindicate establishments, such a claim could well be refused. He called upon protestants to consider how such an evil as this might be prevented; and he declared, that the only effectual security against it was to be found in the principles advocated in his discourse. "Adopt," said he, "these principles, and the ambition of popery is at an end; its efforts are paralyzed, its hopes are cut off, and, viewed as a religious system, it must quickly become of all others the least considerable, because of all others it has the least support from reason or from Scripture." And he added, "That these principles might be before the eye of his countrymen, in the event of such a crisis occurring, as he has supposed, is the main reason that has induced the author to allow this discourse, with all its imperfections, to come before the public."

Mr Marshall's sermon was allowed to circulate during the summer, and do its work among the people, producing conviction in the minds of multitudes, who had never before thought upon the subject, without any attempt at a reply, on the part of the friends of the Establishment. At length, in the month of August, a long and elaborately-written review of it appeared in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*. This article was written with considerable spirit and plausibility; and the appearance of it gladdened the hearts of the adherents of the national church. It was speedily extracted from the periodical in which it originally appeared, published in the form of a pamphlet, and put into circulation, as an antidote to Mr Marshall's anti-establishment doctrines. The writer of the review professed to anticipate a very different result, from the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill, from that which Mr Marshall affirmed to be probable.

“What,” said the reviewer, “if instead of the precursor to hostility, we hail it as the star of peace rising upon our country, after a long and troubled night of anarchy and debate? What if we see in it popery extinguishing her last fires, and obtaining a more pre-eminent station, only that she might decently expire? If these be our sentiments,—and they are the sentiments of at least one-half of the community,—with what propriety can we be called upon to accede to this writer’s conclusion?”\* And, on the supposition that Mr Marshall’s prediction was likely to be realized, the reviewer pronounced the remedy prescribed (the abolishing of establishments) to be worse than the disease. “What,” said he, “is the amount of his (Mr Marshall’s) advice? It is to pull our house down with our own hands, and to enact ourselves the tragedy which is already preparing in the rehearsal. Nay, it is to put the instruments of destruction into the hands of our enemies, and to erect the stage for our own tragic end. For we are persuaded, that if popery shall ever triumph in this country, and again ‘lift her mitred head in courts and parliaments,’ it shall have been when the overthrow of our protestant establishments have opened the way for her triumphal procession, when catholicism united is opposed to protestantism without a head, when she lies at the mercy of her enemies,—

——— ‘ingens littore truncus,  
Avulsumque humeris *caput* et sine nomine corpus.’”\*

A few months after the review appeared, Mr Marshall published a large pamphlet, in the form of “A Letter to the Rev. Andrew Thomson, D. D.,” † in which he discussed the subject of ecclesiastical establishments at much greater length than he had done in his sermon. His object in presenting himself to public notice a second time, he declared, was not solely, nor even chiefly, the answering of the review. “I would enter,” said he, “on a somewhat wider field; I

\* Review of Mr Marshall’s Sermon. P. 18.

† Ibid, p. 19.

‡ Dr Thomson was Editor of the Edinburgh Christian Instructor.



would perform a more important service to the great cause of truth and reason. Unequal as I may be to the task, I would examine the more essential points of difference between those called churchmen and those called dissenters,—would expose the iniquity, as well as the folly, of all human usurpation in matters of religion,—and would exhibit in its true colours, that system of antichristianism, which has laboured so long, and with so much success, to destroy the distinction between the world and the church, and to forge chains for the understandings and the consciences of men.”\* In this publication, Mr Marshall, in a style peculiarly his own—clear, pointed, and energetic—considered the two great branches of argument, in favour of religious establishments, drawn from Scripture and expediency; and it will be difficult to find, in any production, a train of reasoning more logically conclusive than that which he pursues from beginning to end of his triumphant “Letter.” The effect produced by this publication, was to widen and deepen, to a great extent, the current of opinion, which had set in strongly in favour of voluntary churches.

The reviewer did not leave Mr Marshall in undisturbed possession of the field. He published a “Defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments,” in reply to Mr Marshall’s “Letter.” This pamphlet is chiefly occupied with a discussion of the two following questions; “*first*, Does Scripture authorize governments to contribute to the support and spread of religion? and, *secondly*, Are such contributions necessary for the maintenance of religion?” The author, of course, endeavoured to show, that to both of these questions an affirmative answer must be given. He took up the arguments which Mr Marshall had previously discussed, and attempted to rebut, one by one, the conclusions which he had established. It is possible that the reviewer’s reasoning may prove satisfactory to those who are already convinced that ecclesiastical establishments are both scriptural and expedient; but it does not appear at all fitted to produce conviction in the

\* Letter to the Rev. A. Thomson, D.D. P. 7.

mind of an opponent, or even to satisfy the inquiries of a neutral person, who has not yet formed a decided opinion on either side of the question. Placed beside Mr Marshall's "Letter," the reasoning of the "Defence" is pointless and inconclusive.

During the year 1831, a volume entitled *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered*, appeared from the fertile and energetic pen of Mr Marshall. The controversy was now beginning to assume a more decided and determined shape. The sphere of it was also widening. Newspapers and religious periodicals were throwing open their columns to the combatants, on the one side or the other. A strong impression had been produced, both amongst the common people and also amongst men of education, by the discussion which had already taken place. Mr Marshall perceived the vast importance, not merely of keeping up, but of deepening, the interest which had been excited among all classes, on this engrossing subject. He considered that, in the present peculiarly favourable state of the public mind, it would be wrong "for the friends of religion and of human liberty, to let the discussion respecting church establishments die away, or even to let it languish for any length of time." "Who," said he in his Introduction, "that has the smallest tincture either of patriotism or of religion, of regard for the interests of christianity, or for the interests of his fellow-men, would not wish to see it prolonged, and prolonged with increasing spirit? A change must come; evils of such enormous magnitude cannot always exist; the sanctuary of the Lord must be cleansed; his holy mountain must be freed from what is so much calculated to hurt and to destroy. Are not symptoms of the happy era beginning to appear? Is not the night far spent, and the day at hand? Is not the fabric, which has so long encumbered and oppressed the world, now tottering to its fall? Are not wise and good men, throughout our country and throughout the globe, longing to see it laid in the dust? Are not the nervous alarm, the frantic rage, the imbecile malignity of those who

labour to uphold it, proclaiming aloud their own secret conviction of the hopelessness of their efforts? And who, in such circumstances, would withhold his hand from it? Who that has but the opportunity, not to speak of any more special call, would not deem himself bound to lend it a thrust that may help it down." \*

Under such impressions as these, of the importance of the controversy, Mr Marshall penned his *Ecclesiastical Establishments farther considered*; and the design which he had in view, in the publication of this volume, he stated in the following terms:—"My purpose, in the following pages, is to give a cursory view of the controversy as it at present exists, chiefly to the north of the Tweed, vindicating the statements in my Sermon, and in my Letter to Dr Thomson, from the sophistry and misrepresentation of some writers who have appeared on the other side; and exhibiting, if not the whole of the argument, which is considerably various, yet the more material points of it, in a form as condensed and as perspicacious as possible; that any objection which may have been started may be removed; that any dust which may have been raised may be cleared away; that the less informed part of the community may be instructed; that the wavering, if there be any in that predicament, may be confirmed; that the gainsayers may be silenced, or put to shame; and that all who have not made up their minds on the subject, may be enabled to do so without difficulty, and on irrefragable grounds." Those who have perused with attention, and without prejudice, this volume, will admit, that it discovers, on the part of the author, an intimate knowledge of the various branches of the subject which he undertakes to discuss; that it is written with great perspicuity and fairness; that the argument, throughout, is conducted with consummate skill; and that the writer, on account of the ability which he displays, is entitled to rank in the very foremost class of controversialists.

But whatever opinion may be formed of the merits of Mr



Marshall's publications on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments, the fact is incontrovertible, that these publications produced a powerful impression on a large portion of the community, connected both with the national church, and also with the various bodies of dissenters. If religious establishments in this country are in a much more tottering condition than they formerly were, to Mr Marshall must be awarded the honour or the blame (according to the particular view which individuals may be inclined to take of the subject) of having struck the first effectual blow. His talented productions produced a two-fold effect : they diffused light, and inspired energy.

With the view of diffusing information on the subject of voluntary churches, and keeping alive the interest which had already been excited, as well as giving a proper direction to the current of public opinion, it was considered desirable by some, that an association should be formed. Some of those ministers, who were friendly to the principles which Mr Marshall had so successfully inculcated in his publications, met together, for the purpose of consultation ; when it was resolved to take steps for accomplishing this object.

A meeting was called by a circular addressed to a number of gentlemen, in the following terms :—

“SIR,—At last meeting of the United Associate Synod, a number of its ministers had a friendly consultation respecting the best means of promoting the voluntary support of the gospel. All present were of opinion, that an Association, embracing evangelical dissenters from different denominations, might do much, by publications and otherwise, to secure this object, and to obtain for voluntary churches a redress of their grievances. To further these views, a committee was appointed, consisting of the Rev. Dr Brown, Broughton Place ; the Rev. John M'Gilchrist, Rose Street, Edinburgh ; the Rev. William Laurie, Lauder ; and the Rev. David King, Dalkeith. Mr M'Gilchrist to be convener.

“By agreement of this committee, you are invited to breakfast in the Royal Hotel (Gibb's), Prince's Street, Edinburgh, at 10 o'clock, on Tuesday the 24th inst., when the dissenting ministers and laymen

present shall advise concerning the constitution of the intended Society, and its plan of operations.

“JOHN M'GILCHRIST, *Convener.*”

“*Edinburgh, January 2, 1832.*”

This meeting took place, agreeably to the notice given, on the 24th of January, in the Royal Hotel, when it was unanimously resolved, “That a society should be formed, having for its object the asserting and maintaining the rights of voluntary churches.” A committee was appointed to draw up rules, and to report to another meeting.

On the 13th of September, 1832, a large assemblage of the friends of voluntary church principles, convened by circular, met in the Royal Saloon, Edinburgh. The meeting consisted of ministers and laymen belonging to various denominations of evangelical dissenters; and the Rev. Dr Peddie occupied the chair. Mr M'Gilchrist, as convener of the committee formerly appointed, reported their proceedings, and read the rules which they had prepared.

The following resolution was moved by Andrew Coventry Dick, Esq., seconded by the Rev. Dr Brown, and unanimously adopted:—“That this meeting approve of the report of the committee now read, and that the gentlemen present do now, agreeably thereto, form themselves into a Society, by the name of THE VOLUNTARY CHURCH ASSOCIATION, and adopt the fundamental principles and rules recommended in said report, as the fundamental principles and rules of said Society.” The fundamental principles referred to in this resolution, are the following:—“That a compulsory support of religious institutions is inconsistent with the nature of religion, the spirit of the gospel, the express appointments of Jesus Christ, and the civil rights of men: That, in every case where the individual disapproves of the system supported, or of the principle of its support, it is an unwarrantable attack on the right of property, and a direct invasion of the rights of conscience: That it keeps in a state of unnatural separation, those who ought to be

united, and in a state of unnatural union, those who ought to be separate : That its tendency, as exhibited in its effects, is to secularize religion, promote hypocrisy, perpetuate error, produce infidelity, destroy the unity and purity of the church, and disturb the peace and order of civil society : That, by its direct and indirect influence, it is among the principal causes of the low state of christianity in those countries where it is professed, and of the slowness of its progress throughout the world ; and that, while thus unreasonable, impolitic, unjust, and mischievous, it has not even the plea of necessity, christianity having within itself, in the native influence of its doctrines on the minds of those who believe them, every thing which is requisite for its efficient support and indefinite extension.”

These were the fundamental principles of the Association that was now formed. Mr Dick, in a long and eloquent speech\* which he delivered in support of the above resolution, referring to the principles on which the society was founded, said, “ These will show, that if we are hostile to Establishments, it is not for few, or slight, or ill-considered reasons ; that our opinions have been formed after a wide and deliberate inquiry ; and that we have founded our Association on a broad and varied basis of truth. We unite in different characters. We unite as citizens, to accuse Establishments of being unjust and oppressive, adverse to civil freedom and an equitable distribution of political power ; as lovers of good government, to declare that they have been the fertile sources of perplexity and toil to statesmen, and to subjects, of uneasiness, jealousy, and strife ; as men of sense and reason, to expose their inconsistency with the nature of human society, which is ever advancing, while they are immutable, and claim to be perfect, and are therefore hostile to new developments of truth, lest their imperfections should be detected, and their authority weakened. But above all, we have united as *christians*, to teach our

\* The substance of this speech was afterwards published in a small pamphlet.



countrymen that Church Establishments are at variance with the spirit of our religion; with its express appointments; with the example of its early history; that they have corrupted the church, retarded its progress, and tarnished its reputation. Here it is that we take our chief stand, and a union upon such grounds we feel to be most wise and necessary; for indeed, no class of men has equal cause with christians to oppose Establishments; none has suffered so much by their existence, and none will be so much benefitted by their downfall." \*

It was resolved by the meeting, before they separated, that their committee be instructed, "as early as convenient, to call a public meeting of all persons friendly to the support of the gospel by voluntary contributions; to announce the formation of the society, and make known the principles on which it is founded, and the objects it has in view."

The example set by the meeting, whose proceedings have now been detailed, was speedily followed in other parts of the country. On the 12th of November, the same year, a numerous public meeting was held in Gordon Street Church, Glasgow, at which the Rev. Dr Dick presided, when a similar association was formed. Kindred institutions were organised not only in the principal towns of Scotland, but also in many of the rural districts. The flame spread to the North of England, where several voluntary church associations sprung into existence. On the 29th January 1833, the association formed in Edinburgh had a very crowded public meeting, at which the principles of the society were announced and vindicated. The committee connected with the society in Glasgow projected and commenced a cheap periodical, bearing the title of the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, the pages of which were designed to be wholly devoted to the maintenance of those principles, on which these associations are formed.\*

\* Speech, p. 7.

\* This Magazine, humble though its form be, has from its commencement occupied a highly respectable place among the periodicals of the day, for talent, and energy, and variety. On account of the extent of its circulation,

The voluntary church question found its way into the British House of Commons. Mr George Faithful, M. P. for Brighton, moved, on the 16th of April, 1833, the following resolution :—" That the Church of England, as by law established, is not recommended by practical utility ; that its revenues have always been subject to legislative enactments ; and that the greater part, if not the whole, of those revenues ought to be appropriated to the relief of the nation." This resolution Mr Faithful supported by a long and honest speech. After a short discussion, his motion was negatived without a division. It was not to be supposed, that such a question could be favourably entertained by the members of the House of Commons ; seeing that the adopting of the resolution involved in it a great organic change in the British constitution. The bringing forward of this motion, in the circumstances of the case, was considered by many to be altogether premature. The only good that could result from the discussion of it, was, that it afforded an opportunity of bringing before the minds of members of parliament homely truths, on an important subject, to which they might probably not think it worth their while to attend, if presented to them in any other form.

The friends of Establishments had good reason to be alarmed by the rapid and extensive diffusion of voluntary church principles. At first they maintained rather a dignified silence. With the exception of the anonymous reviewer whose lucubrations have been already noticed, no one ventured for some time to put forth even a solitary pamphlet in defence of Establishments. The dignitaries of the national church seemed, either to be looking on with silent contempt, or to be flattering themselves with the hope that the storm would speedily blow past. It was not until they beheld voluntary church associations springing up, in both town and country, that they began in good earnest to bestir

and the general respectability of its papers (though probably sometimes a little too fiery), it has proved a most efficient organ for the maintenance and propagation of voluntary church principles.

themselves. A numerous meeting of the friends of the Established Church, both ministers and laymen, was held at Glasgow on the 31st January and 1st February, 1833, when it was resolved to form an "Association for promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland." So great was the zeal displayed on this occasion, that it was considered necessary to spend two days in delivering speeches, which were occupied chiefly with the praises of the national Zion, and with philippics against the advocates of the voluntary principle. Similar associations were formed in other parts of the country. A periodical was, at the same time, commenced in Glasgow, under the title of the *Church of Scotland Magazine*, avowedly for the defence of the Establishment.\* Pamphlets also were multiplied on the same side of the question, some of which were sufficiently abusive; and the contest waxed hotter and hotter, until it raged furiously not only in the large towns, but also in the most sequestered districts of the country. Religious societies, where churchmen and dissenters had long co-operated harmoniously together, were broken up, as the former refused any longer to associate with the latter; and, in many instances, the ties of friendship were broken asunder by means of the controversy.

Amongst the number of those writers who took up the pen, at this crisis, to defend the cause of church establishments, by far the ablest and most effective, was Dr John Inglis, one of the ministers of Edinburgh. He published, in 1833, a *Vindication of Ecclesiastical Establishments*, in which he reviewed, and endeavoured to confirm, the arguments which are drawn from Scripture and expediency in favour of national establishments of religion, and attempted to obviate the objections which have been advanced against them. From the frequent references which he makes to the publications of Mr Marshall and Mr Ballantyne, he appears,

\* I have lately observed a notice in one of the newspapers, that this periodical has run its course, and become extinct. This must be a matter of congratulation to the Church of Scotland, whose professed advocate this magazine was; seeing that it was one of those dangerous auxiliaries, whose reckless violence does positive injury to the cause which they are anxious to support.



in penning his volume, to have had his eye chiefly fixed on the writings of these individuals. His *Vindication* is characterized by perspicuity and candour. The pervading tone of it, is that of calm, dispassionate reasoning ; and it is honourably free from all personal abuse of his opponents. As a clear and able statement of the arguments in favour of religious establishments, it is fairly entitled to take the lead of all the publications which have been called forth, by the present controversy, on that side of the question. If the author has failed in conveying conviction to the mind, this is to be attributed more to the inherent weakness of the cause, which he has undertaken to defend, than to any want of tact or ingenuity in the mode of conducting his vindication.

At the commencement of the controversy, Mr Marshall had complained that no antagonist worthy of his notice had met him on the field, that he had been assailed by unknown individuals who fought under the covert of a mask ; and he had expressed a wish, that some one would come forth to the combat, with whom he might esteem it an honour to contend. His wish was now gratified by the publication of Dr Inglis' book. A more distinguished, or a more honourable champion, than the one who now made his appearance, the national church was not able to produce. Mr Marshall accordingly girt himself anew for the combat. After a short interval a volume appeared from his pen in reply to Dr Inglis. This new publication consisted of a series of letters addressed to that respected individual. While Mr Marshall's book was passing through the press, Dr Inglis died ; and when the Reply was published, there was a degree of awkwardness in the form in which it was presented to the public, it being that of a direct address to a person who was no longer among the living. This circumstance, however, did not affect the merits of the volume. The cause, which Dr Inglis had vindicated, was not the cause of an individual, but of a party ; and Mr Marshall, in addressing to him the letters which constituted his Reply, dealt with him in this capacity. In these letters, Mr Marshall

followed the track, which the Doctor had pursued in his book, combating with great ability his arguments, exposing his fallacies, and pointing out anew the unscriptural nature, the injustice, and impolicy of all religious establishments. Mr Marshall brought forward, in his Reply, a variety of additional facts and illustrations, which were not in any of his former publications; and by the successful manner in which he executed his task, he fully sustained the well-earned reputation which he had already acquired.

Those who felt interested in the stability of the national church had good reason to be alarmed at the progress which voluntary church sentiments were making among the mass of the people. The numerous publications that issued from the press, on this great question, in every possible variety of form, and the crowded public meetings that were held, in large towns and in country districts, for the discussion of it, produced an uncommon excitement; and, as the assailants of a vulnerable system have a much easier, and in general a much more popular task to accomplish, than the defenders of it, no doubt can be reasonably entertained that the result of these publications, and of these meetings, has been highly unfavourable to the cause of ecclesiastical establishments.

The proceedings of the General Assembly, these few years past, and the speeches that have been delivered in it, on the engrossing topics of the day, show the alarm which the agitation of the voluntary church question has produced in the bosom of all parties belonging to the national church. A degree of irresolution has marked their recent proceedings, which we search for in vain in the annals of those years (now gone by), when dissent, instead of demanding, with a clamorous voice, an equality of rights, was thankful to be permitted to exist. Those who have, for some time past, been guiding the councils of the supreme judicatory of the Church of Scotland, have felt themselves placed in an awkward and difficult predicament. On the one hand, the people demand a reform of their ecclesiastical institutions. On the other, the aristocracy wish things to continue as they are. While

it is acknowledged that there is no small danger to the stability of the national church, in alienating from it either of these classes, it is also admitted that a difficulty of no ordinary kind presents itself in the attempt to reconcile the jarring wishes and interests of both. The making of such an attempt is perilous, as well as difficult; and the danger consists in this, that, while half measures are adopted, for the purpose of pleasing both parties, neither will be satisfied.

It is such an experiment as this, that the preponderating party in the General Assembly have been making of late years; and it has been productive of the natural result. The people are more than grumbling; a large proportion of them are much dissatisfied with the conduct of their ecclesiastical rulers; while the aristocracy are highly offended. The proceedings of the *evangelical* or *popular* party (as it is termed), with regard to patronage and calls, have been strangely inconsistent with their professions of regard for the rights of the people. Since the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, the subject of patronage has been repeatedly discussed in the General Assembly. Motion after motion has been brought forward with the view of inducing the Assembly to declare patronage a grievance, and to adopt measures for its removal. What has been the result? These motions have been uniformly rejected by overwhelming majorities; and (strange to say) these majorities have been produced by the popular party making common cause, on this subject, with their opponents belonging to the moderate side of the house. If it be allowable to form a judgment from the speeches that have been delivered, as oft as this question has been discussed, the fear of losing the favour of the aristocracy, and of alienating them from the church, appears to have had a considerable influence in leading the Assembly to reject, by such decided majorities, all those overtures that have been brought forward for the abolition of patronage. One striking feature in the discussions on this subject, has been the strong language which some of the leading men, belonging to what is called the popular side of the house, have made use of in



denouncing popular election. One reverend doctor, distinguished for his eloquence, shuddered at the idea of the mass of the people being entrusted with the choice of their own ministers, on account of their excessive “gullibility,” and on account of the influence which “parochial demagogues” are apt to exercise over them.\* Another doctor, while in the very act of proposing a resolution, affirming patronage to be a grievance, and calling upon the Assembly to consider the best means for abolishing it, declared, “he was not there to plead for popular election;” and he added, with a pious horror, “he believed that it (popular election) would prove a curse to the Church of Scotland; † while a learned Lord of Session congratulated the house on the strong demonstration of feeling which had been given on this point. He was glad to hear it “so plainly declared” by all the preceding speakers, that they did “not intend any thing like popular election.” ‡

But then, while patronage must not be abolished, on account of the dangerous consequences that would result from the abolition of it, an attempt must be made to please the people; and as they could not on account of their “gullibility,” be safely entrusted with the power of *choosing* their ministers, the happy expedient was hit upon of giving them the power of quarrelling with their patrons, by rejecting (according to the fancy or caprice of the moment), the patron’s presentee. This high privilege, the venerable Assembly conceived, was all that the good people of Scotland could be safely trusted with. Hence the birth of the celebrated Veto Act. This act was first submitted to the consideration of the General Assembly, in the form of an overture, at their meeting in 1834. It was brought forward and supported by the popular party, as a cure, or at least a mitigation of the evils of patronage; while it was opposed by the moderate party, as an infringement upon the civil rights of patrons,—

\* See report of Dr Chalmers’ speech on patronage question, in 1833.

† See report of Dr W. Thomson’s speech on this question in 1836.

‡ See report of Lord Moncreiff’s speech, same debate.

as inconsistent with the fundamental principle of the presbyterian polity established in Scotland, and as a measure which could not be carried into operation, without the interposition of the legislature. After a keen discussion, it was carried by a majority of forty-six votes,\* that the overture be transmitted to presbyteries for their opinion; and it was agreed, without a vote, that it be converted into an interimaet.

The following is the enactment of the General Assembly :

“ *Edinburgh, May 31, 1834.*—The General Assembly declare, that it is a fundamental law of this church, that no pastor shall be intruded on any congregation, contrary to the will of the people; and, in order that this principle may be carried into full effect, the General Assembly, with the consent of a majority of the presbyteries of this church, do declare, enact, and ordain, That it shall be an instruction to presbyteries, that if, at the moderating in a call to a vacant pastoral charge, the major part of the male heads of families, members of the vacant congregation, and in full communion with the church, shall disapprove of the person in whose favour the call is proposed to be moderated in, such disapproval shall be deemed sufficient ground for the presbytery rejecting such person, and that he shall be rejected accordingly, and due notice thereof forthwith given to all concerned; but that, if the major part of the said heads of families shall not disapprove of such person to be their pastor, the presbytery shall proceed with the settlement, according to the rules of the church: And farther declare, that no person shall be held to be entitled to disapprove as aforesaid, who shall refuse, if required, solemnly to declare, in presence of the presbytery, that he is actuated by no factious or malicious motive, but solely by a conscientious regard to the spiritual interests of himself or the congregation.”

This overture received the sanction of the majority of presbyteries, and is now the acknowledged law, according to which calls are moderated in the Church of Scotland. Along with the overture, a number of rules, prepared by a com-

\* The state of the vote was 184 *for*, and 138 *against* the overture.

mittee of Assembly, and designed to regulate the forms of procedure under this act, was also transmitted to presbyteries, and received their sanction. These regulations, whatever might be the design of the Assembly in preparing them, tend greatly to restrict any little freedom which the act might be supposed to confer upon the people, and open a wide door for contention to all parties concerned. It is not the dissent of a majority of heads of families (being members) that are present on the day of moderation, but the dissent of a majority of persons standing on the roll, that can be sustained by the presbytery as a reason for not proceeding with the settlement. After an apparent majority of dissents have been lodged, the presbytery are to adjourn their proceedings till another meeting, to be held not less than ten days, nor more than fourteen after the first. In the mean time, the presentee, if he desire it, or if the presbytery deem it expedient, is to have an opportunity of preaching to the congregation. At the second meeting of presbytery, no new dissents can be lodged, but any person who has previously dissented, may withdraw his dissent. If, at this meeting, it is found that there is still a majority of persons on the roll dissenting, it is competent to the patron, or the presentee, or to any member of presbytery, to require any or all of the persons so dissenting, to appear at a meeting of the presbytery, or of a committee of their number, to be held, within ten days at farthest, at some place within the parish, and then and there to declare that they are not actuated, in their opposition, by any factious or malicious motive, but solely by a conscientious regard to the spiritual interests of themselves or the congregation ; and should any one of the dissentients fail to appear, or refuse to make the declaration required, his name is to be struck off from the list of persons dissenting. If, after this process has been gone through, a major part of persons standing on the roll is still found dissenting, the presentee is to be rejected by the presbytery ; and the patron is to be required to give a presentation to another person, when exactly the same course of proceedings must be fol-



lowed; and so on with regard to all the successive presentations that shall be given within the time (six months after the vacancy occurs), limited by law. If at the end of that period, it shall be found, in consequence of the squabbles that have taken place, or from any other cause, no presentation has been given to a person, from whose settlement a majority on the roll do not dissent, the *Jus Devolutum*, or the power of presenting, devolves upon the presbytery, and then the strife is at an end. Whether the person, whom the presbytery presents, shall be agreeable to the parishioners or not, all opposition must cease.\*

Such is the Veto Act; and such are the regulations with which the operation of it is fettered. Though intended as a boon, it has been sulkily received by the people; while a large and influential portion of the Church of Scotland are decidedly opposed to it. The following passage, taken from the Report of the Anti-patronage Society for the year 1834, will show what is the opinion which the Directors of that Society entertained of the Veto Act. They anticipated not good, but evil from the passing of it. The description, which they give of the nature and tendency of it, is strikingly just.

“Those who conceive (say they) that the Act of Assembly, 1834, introducing a *veto* by the people on the patron’s nomination (which is something less than a call), restores their true rights, do greatly misconceive; inasmuch as it permits

\* The following extract is taken from the account of the last General Assembly’s proceedings, given in the Christian Instructor for June 1838; from which it appears that some alterations have been made with regard to the above regulations:—“Mr J. Shaw Stewart, who was appointed in room of Lord Moncreiff, convener of the committee ‘on calls,’ gave in a report containing certain proposed alterations in the regulations. In the first class of regulations, presbyteries were enjoined to hold a second meeting to afford opportunity for entering farther dissents, or withdrawing dissents entered at the first meeting held for that purpose; and he had come to be of opinion, that the second meeting might, with advantage, be dispensed with, as it might lead to canvassing and caballing. In the third class of regulations, he proposed to provide that presentees nominated by presbyteries should be subject to the same regulations as were applicable to other presentees. The other alterations proposed were merely verbal, or otherwise unimportant. After some discussion on the proposed alterations, all of which were adopted,” &c.

the establishment of the ministerial relation without any direct or expressed assent of the people, and restricts them to a simple right of refusal. The Directors are satisfied, that an arrangement of this character cannot come to good. It leaves untouched the bought and sold marketable right of patronage; it refuses to acknowledge the beautiful and christian privilege of expressed assent by the people, as an act of theirs, to the nomination of their ministers; and it bestows upon them a right of contention, discord, and opposition; a privilege which, by its very nature and terms, can never come into active exercise, except in the shape of strife; and which, therefore, will soon probably cease to be either popular or available.

“By this law, a parish may be unanimous in desiring some one individual, or any one of ten or fifty individuals; but in this desire, they may be totally frustrated at the word of one person, the purchasing or inheriting owner of their patronage, who may be unconnected or unacquainted with them, or be of any or no character. They have no choice but of *his one nominee*, be he who he may; for while, it is true, they may reject his first, the only consequence is, that they will be devolved on his second, or his third, or his fourth, or his any number, until his last shall be accepted by them. They can originate nobody. Their predicament is the unhappy one of *rejecting* the person chosen for them by another; they never can *choose*.

“Nor is this all. What has now been stated may be the issue where the parish has taken the trouble, and paid the expense, and had the hardihood, to organize itself, so that a ‘majority of the male communicants’ shall be found to come forward against the patron. This, however, is the favourable alternative. According to human nature, and all past experience, the more likely thing to happen is, submission, coldness, indifference, secession, or abandonment of church altogether, rather than a strife with the influential head of the parish. And it would be no impeachment of these statements, if, for some time, none of them were realised.

Patrons may perhaps act cautiously for a time, rather than all at once brave the consequences of an opposite course ; but the time will come when these consequences will arise again, as, a hundred years ago, under the like circumstances, they did arise.”\*

One of the grounds, on which the Veto Act was opposed by Dr Cook, by the Dean of Faculty (Mr Hope), and other persons well acquainted with ecclesiastical law, was, that it was an attempt “ to impose practically a restriction amounting to a veto on the right of patronage ;” and that it was wholly incompetent, and beyond the powers of the church to do so. It was predicted, that it would create “ animosities, litigation, and injurious delays in the settlement of parishes ;”—“ that there would, as matters now stand, be a constant collision between the civil and ecclesiastical courts, the patron would assert his statutory right, and the civil court would, the law remaining as it is, be bound to confirm it.”†

These predictions are in the course of receiving their fulfilment. Animosities have been excited in great abundance ; litigation has commenced ; injurious delays in the settlement of parishes have taken place ; and the civil and ecclesiastical courts are at present in a state of collision. It was not to be supposed that patrons would tamely submit to have their right of presentation virtually wrested from them by a power which they did not acknowledge. The Earl of Kinnoul, patron of the parish of Auchterarder, has accordingly brought

\* The late learned Dr M'Crie thought as meanly of the Veto Act, as did the Anti-patronage Directors. In a sermon, which he preached to his congregation on the Sabbath immediately after the Act was passed, and which was afterwards published, he adverted to the passing of the Act in the following terms :—“ I say it is more than suspicious that the alleged boon should be presented by the hands of those who have summarily and haughtily thrown out the petitions of the christian people against patronage. They say, they have muzzled the monster : It is a mistake ; they have only muffled him, and they have muzzled the people.”—*Volume of Sermons by Dr M'Crie*. P. 346.

† A few plain Observations on the Enactment of the General Assembly, 1834. By George Cook, D.D. &c. P. 12.



the validity of the Veto Act to a trial before the supreme civil court in Scotland, and has obtained a judgment in his favour. A decided majority\* of the Lords of Session have declared, that Mr Robert Young, the Earl's presentee to that parish, whom the General Assembly had laid aside, on the ground of his being vetoed by the majority of male communicants, has been legally, validly, and effectually presented; and they have ordered the presbytery of Auchterarder to take him on trial, and if found qualified, to receive and admit him according to law. They have also discharged the presbytery of Auchterarder from inducting any other person into that living. Against this decision, an appeal has been taken to the House of Lords; and the matter still remains *sub judice*. In the meantime the General Assembly, at their last meeting (May 1838), resolved to assert their independence, as a spiritual court. They have declared, that whatever shall be the result of the appeal to the House of Lords, they will adhere to their own decision in the case of Mr Young.

In the case of the parish of Lethendy, the authority of the Court of Session has been set at open defiance, by the Commission of the Assembly giving instructions to the presbytery of Dunkeld to proceed with the settlement of Mr Kessen, in the face of an interdict from that court. Mr Clark, at whose instance the interdict was granted, had received a presentation from the crown to that parish, and was rejected under the operation of the Veto Act. Another presentation was issued by the crown, in favour of Mr Kessen. But Mr Clark still retained possession of his presentation, as the crown, though it might grant another, could not recall the one already granted. He applied to the Court of Session for an interdict against the presbytery's sustaining the presen-

\* The majority consisted of the Lord President, the Lord Justice-Clerk, Lords Gillies, Meadowbank, Mackenzie, Medwin, Corehouse, and Cunningham, who gave their opinions *against* the validity of the Act. The minority consisted of Lords Glenlee, Fullerton, Moncreiff, Jeffrey, and Cockburn, who gave their opinions *in favour* of the Act.

tation of Mr Kessen, which he obtained. The Commission instructed the presbytery to proceed, without regard to the *presentation*, upon the *call* alone, to the settlement of Mr Kessen. Mr Clark applied a second time to the Court of Session, and obtained a *supplemental interdict* against the induction of Mr Kessen into the parish of Lethendy upon the *call*. In this new dilemma, the presbytery sought advice from the Commission; and they were ordered to disregard the interdict, and to proceed with Mr Kessen's settlement, according to the instructions which they had already received.\* This has been done; and it now remains to be determined, whether the Court of Session will permit their authority to be despised with impunity by the members of an ecclesiastical court professing to be in close alliance with the state. These are some of the fruits that have resulted from the operation of the Veto Act.

The General Assembly of 1834, besides originating the Act to which the attention of the reader has now been directed, has acquired notoriety on another account. It was this Assembly that commenced that system of agitation concerning church-extension and additional endowments, which has produced such a commotion in the country. Two committees were appointed; one on Church Accommodation, and another on Endowments. The Rev. Dr Chalmers was appointed convener of the former; and Charles Ferguson, Esq. younger of Kilkerran, convener of the latter. A deputation proceeded, in the month of July, to London, to make known to his Majesty's government the destitution of the means of religious instruction, that existed in Scotland, and to implore, in name of the national church, a grant of endowments to all the unendowed churches, which the Establishment had already built, or might afterwards erect, by the voluntary liberality of the people.

Many persons were at a loss to account for this new-born zeal, which had sprung up so unexpectedly and so vigorously

\* Present Position of the Church of Scotland; A Letter to Dr Cook. By James Bryce, D.D. P. 8.

*Mr McKerran could be at my table for his paper  
July 1834*

in the Assembly. All who were acquainted with the past history of this ecclesiastical judicatory knew, that the general policy which it had pursued, was to discourage the erection of additional places of worship in connexion with the Establishment; and that it was with great difficulty, and frequently after a protracted struggle, leave could be obtained to erect in some destitute situation even a single Chapel of Ease. To such an extent did this antipathy influence the decisions of that court, that when a proposal was made in 1818, to erect the English Chapel, in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, into a Chapel of Ease connected with the Church of Scotland, without the inhabitants being required to bear any part of the expense for the support either of the minister or house, it was rejected after a debate, by no less a majority than 98 to 32. It was also known that in many parts of the country, two or more small parishes had been united together, and places of worship had been either altogether suppressed, or permitted to remain empty, without any religious service being performed in them. All these things were matters of history, and those who were acquainted with them naturally enough asked the question, What is it that has so suddenly opened the eyes of the members of the General Assembly, in the year 1834, and made them see such a lamentable religious destitution prevailing both in town and country? What is it that has made them discern, apparently all at once, the existence of such a mass of heathenism, among the population of Scotland, and that has kindled in their bosoms such a flaming zeal to work out the regeneration of those unhappy beings whom they had so long neglected?

Leaving each to form an opinion for himself, on these points, I proceed to notice a remarkable discovery which has been made by the leaders of the church-extension movement. This discovery relates to the rapid and extraordinary increase of dissenters. For a long period, it was generally admitted, by both those within and those without the pale of the Establishment, that the increase of dissenters, in this northern portion of the Island, was owing to the exist-

*year - Union obtaining a Majority (1834)*



ence of the law of patronage, to the sufferance of error in the national church, to the supineness and occasional immorality of her ministers, and to the course of mal-administration pursued by her ecclesiastical judicatories. To these causes were usually attributed the existence and increase of the Secession, the Relief, and of other dissenting societies. But since the commencement of the voluntary church controversy, it has been discovered, that the reason why dissenters have increased in such an extraordinary manner, is the want of accommodation in the parish churches. Because the government has been so very lax, ever since the time of John Knox, as not to build churches in every square and lane of the cities, and in every little straggling village of the country, what could the neglected heathen of this island do, but become dissenters, and build churches for themselves? This is the melancholy discovery that has been made. If there had only been a sufficient number of churches, in which to accommodate the people, these dismal effects would have been prevented. The advocates of the voluntary church system have indeed attempted to show, that the want of churches cannot be the cause of the increase of dissenters, nor of the prevalence of heathenism at home; because a large proportion of the churches in the country are not nearly filled, and there are thousands of unlet and unoccupied seats in the churches of many of the large towns. The supporters of the church-extension scheme endeavour to silence their opponents on this point, by telling them, with great plainness and simplicity, that the existence of empty churches is no reason why new ones should not be built; because every christian government is bound to build churches, wherever there is a population to fill them, whether the people choose to go to them or not.

The plan adopted by the Assembly's church-extension and endowment committees, for accomplishing the object of their appointment, was, raising a fund, by voluntary subscription in the different parishes, for building churches, and soliciting government to grant endowments to the ministers

*This reform mainly is attributable to the*

that might be appointed to these churches. With regard to the first part of this plan, their exertions have been attended with a considerable degree of success; and an encouraging instance has been given of what the voluntary principle is able to accomplish, even in circumstances not the most favourable for its operation. The last report of the church-extension committee presented to the General Assembly (in 1838), states, "that the total number of new churches erected during the last four years, is 187, and the total amount of money collected, £ 205,890." With regard to the other part of the plan, viz. the obtaining of endowments for the new churches, their exertions have hitherto been unsuccessful.

From a circular letter, subscribed by the moderator of the General Assembly (Dr Patrick Macfarlane), and by the conveners of the two committees, and which was sent to the different parishes in January, 1835, it appears, that sanguine hopes were at first entertained, of obtaining endowments from the public treasury. In the commencing paragraph of this circular, the writers say,—“The Assembly’s sub-committee on church accommodation, have been corresponding with public and parliamentary men, on the means by which our church might be so extended, as to meet the wants of our greatly increased population. The replies by which we have been honoured, are, without exception, highly favourable to our object; but there is one opinion in which they all concur, and which we would feel it altogether out of place and of duty to withhold from you; and that is, as to the great expediency of petitions, numerous and numerously signed, from all parts of the country; and this for the purpose both of laying the wants of the people before the legislature, and of expressing the wide-spread attachment which prevails for the Establishment, among all classes of society in Scotland.”

No fewer than five different forms of a petition accompanied this letter, that the people might adopt one or other of them, according to the circumstances of the district.

Great exertions were made to procure petitions from the various localities, and also to swell the number of petitioners to the greatest possible amount. The unexpected dismissal of Lord Melbourne's ministry, and the recal of Sir Robert Peel and of his party to the cabinet, excited high hopes in the bosoms of the church-extendors. The King's speech, at the opening of the new parliament in February 1835, was of a high-church complexion, and, among other things, contained a recommendation to grant money for building and endowing new churches in connexion with the Establishment of Scotland.

Meanwhile, dissenters were not idle. The petitions on the side of the national church, were every where met by counter-petitions on the part of dissenters. In general, the petitions against endowments were more numerously signed than those which were presented in favour of them ; and it deserves to be recorded, to the honour of liberal-minded churchmen, that many of them, in all parts of the country, though friendly to the principle of an Establishment, showed their disapprobation of the endowment scheme, and their regard for dissenters, by subscribing the petitions which dissenters presented against the granting of additional endowments.

Soon after the agitation commenced on the subject of church extension, an active and powerful auxiliary to the dissenting interest sprung up in the "Scottish Central Board." This Board was formed at Edinburgh, on the 17th of December, 1834, "for extending the principle of voluntary churches, and vindicating the rights of dissenters." On all the public questions affecting the rights and privileges of dissenters, that have come before parliament since the formation of the Board, it has acted with a promptitude, and energy, and wisdom, which give it a strong claim on the gratitude and support of the various classes of evangelical dissenters in Scotland. When the Board understood that the Assembly's committee had formed a plan for procuring petitions to parliament, from all the parishes, in support of



the church-extension scheme, and that they had put into circulation statistical tables, which were calculated to produce an erroneous impression, with regard to the want of church accommodation, they immediately procured from the various quarters, where a deficiency was alleged to exist, as authentic information as they could obtain, of the actual accommodation, both in established and in dissenting churches. The information which they received, was published by them in a Statement, which was extensively circulated, and tended to open the eyes of many to the unjust and sectarian character of the General Assembly's scheme. The tables contained in this Statement showed, that the outcry which had been so loudly raised about the want of church accommodation, had in reality little or no foundation; that if the dissenting places of worship were to be taken into the account, as well as those belonging to the Establishment, so far from there being a want of accommodation, there was, in many of the towns and country districts, an actual surplus. This difference of result exhibited in the Statement of the Board, from that which had been shown in the circular of the church-extension committee, is easily explained. The committee did not think it worth their while to mention in their circular, the church accommodation which dissenters had provided for themselves. They acted on the principle, that whatever may be the religious opinions of any portion of the community, accommodation connected with the Establishment ought to be provided out of the public funds for the whole population. The Board transmitted a copy of their Statement to every member of the House of Commons; and from a considerable number of them answers were received, declaring their determination to oppose any grant of the public money for the endowment of new churches.

The attention of the United Associate Synod was called to this subject, at their meeting in April, 1835, and a resolution was adopted by them, to petition both houses of parliament against granting any farther endowments to the national church. It was also resolved to present a memorial

to his Majesty's ministers on the subject of endowments, and to send a deputation to London, to enforce said memorial, and to watch over the progress of this business. The deputation whom the Synod appointed on this errand, consisted of Messrs David Young of Perth, and James Harper of Leith, ministers, and William Ellis, elder. Considerable hopes were entertained that the information which this deputation would be able to communicate to the members of government, and also to the liberal members of parliament, concerning the exact state of the endowment question in Scotland, would produce an impression highly favourable to the views of dissenters; the more especially as Sir Robert Peel and the high-church ministry, which had been formed under his auspices, had been obliged to resign, in consequence of a defeat on the Irish Church question, and had been succeeded by Lord Melbourne and his reform associates.

The Synod's deputation proceeded to London, and discharged, in a very able and business-like manner, the important duty that was entrusted to them. They obtained an interview with the Premier, and with some of the leading members of government; they also waited upon many members of parliament connected with both sides of the house; and they communicated to all of these individuals much useful information concerning the great questions that were agitating the country. Besides these personal interviews, they made a liberal distribution of the Synod's memorial, accompanied by a letter containing, in a condensed form, the strong points of their case. This document I here insert entire, as it furnishes a clear, distinct, and compendious view of the grounds on which the claims of the Church of Scotland, for additional endowments, have been opposed by the Scottish dissenters. It is entitled, *Case for the dissenters of Scotland, respectfully submitted by the deputation from the United Associate Synod, appointed to communicate with his Majesty's ministers, &c.*

“ So far as circumstances would permit, we have waited on members, and have found them in general favourable to

our views ; but as we cannot remain in town to complete this service, we avail ourselves of this mode of communication, in the hope that it may draw attention to the merits of our case. The Synod which we represent, as is stated in our memorial, consists of three hundred and fifty congregations. The grounds on which we oppose the claim in question, and on which we confidently hope that parliament will sustain our opposition to it, are the following, namely—

“ That although the measure to which we object is often represented as compassionately intended to provide for the poor, yet, as petitions for it show, it is in fact intended for the endowment of churches and chapels already existing, or to be erected for the rich and the poor alike ; that to represent such a measure as needed for the poor of Scotland, is egregiously to mislead the legislature, for the instances in which they are excluded from places of worship, by want of room, or by inability to pay for sittings, are so rare, that to make them a matter of parliamentary consideration, is absolutely ridiculous ; that what is claimed for the Church of Scotland is not a right, secured by existing statute, but a favour, for which the law, as it stands, makes no provision ; that since, by the Act of Toleration for England, and by securities for Scotland, equally valid, the right of dissenters to avow and propagate their religious belief, is not only recognized, but established, and incorporated with the laws of the country, the legislature is bound to protect dissenters from injury or aggression ; that the proposed measure is glaringly unjust, and deeply injurious, inasmuch as it would confer a new favour on one religious party, which is rich and endowed already, at the expense of another which is poor, unendowed, and contentedly supporting its own religious institutions ; that this injustice is aggravated by the consideration, that dissenters in Scotland are not the few whose interest in a measure for the many it might be immaterial or impossible to consult, but in fact a numerous body, consisting of about 800 congregations, while the congregations of the Established Church do not greatly exceed 1000 ; that



although there were no injustice in the principle of the measure, yet the account given, by its promoters, of the present state of church accommodation in Scotland, is (as has been proved by the 'Statement' of the Dissenters' Board in Edinburgh, copies of which have been sent to members of parliament) so grossly erroneous, that no legislative measure can in fairness be founded on it ; that the measure involves a principle which, if extended to England and Ireland (and why sanction it at all, if it is not to be so extended ?), would bring on the country an intolerable burden, to the injury of its peace and religious well-being ; that the smallness of the sum which the Church of Scotland may submit to ask at present, is no mitigation of the measure, for although the sum may be small, the principle is great, and if the sum be small, so much the more shameful is it to force any portion of it, by legal compulsion, out of the pockets of dissenters, who not only support their own institutions, without asking any thing from the state, but are active in diffusing the gospel at home and abroad ; that although dissenters in Scotland are united in opposing the measure, they are not alone in doing so, for many enlightened and respectable churchmen have seen it their duty to oppose it along with them ; that to grant the boon required, instead of doing good, would do much evil, by putting an arrest upon their benevolent exertions, by which alone, as we believe, the spiritual wants of Scotland can be suitably supplied ; that we have no dislike to the Established Church in Scotland, viewed simply as a christian community, and would rejoice to see her the instrument of reclaiming all that is unreclaimed ; but we appeal to all that is reason and decency, whether compelling us to give of our substance, and thereby to cripple the resources of our own religious beneficence, for the extension of a church to which we do not belong, can promote the prosperity of that church ; we believe that it never can, and therefore we ask the Church of Scotland, as she values her own prosperity, and is willing to do as she would be done by, to abstain from a deed of such flagrant injustice.

“ Such are some of the grounds on which we rest a strong conviction, that the legislature will not grant the money prayed for, and ought not to do so. We ask no favour ; the sum of our prayer is, let us alone, or give us that protection, as British dissenters, which common justice so obviously assigns to us.”

On the 11th of June, 1835, Sir William Rae brought the subject of endowments for the Scottish Church, under the notice of the House of Commons, by moving, “ That the petitions presented to the House, relative to the building and endowing of places of worship connected with the Established Church of Scotland, be referred to a select committee ; and that such committee shall inquire, and report how far the building and endowing of such places of worship is required for the moral and religious instruction of the lower orders of the people in Scotland.” This motion was met by another from the Lord Advocate Murray, for an address to the Crown, to issue a commission “ to inquire into the opportunities of religious worship, and the means of religious instruction afforded to the people of Scotland ; as to the state of the law in regard to the building and repairing of churches ; and also as to any funds which are now applicable to the purposes of the Established Church.” The debate on this question was adjourned till the 1st of July, when Sir William Rae’s motion, and the Lord Advocate’s amendment were withdrawn ; and a resolution, proposed by Lord John Russell, was unanimously adopted, which was, that a royal commission be appointed by the Crown, “ to inquire into the opportunities of religious worship, and means of religious instruction, and the pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, and how far these are of avail for the moral and religious improvement of the poor and working classes ; and, with this view, to obtain information respecting their stated attendance at places of worship, and their actual connexion with any religious denomination ; to inquire what funds are now, or may hereafter be made available for the purposes of the Established Church of Scotland ; and to

report, from time to time, in order that such remedies may be applied to any existing evils, as parliament may think fit."\*

The appointment of a royal commission, for the purposes now stated, was not altogether agreeable either to the friends of the Establishment, or to the dissenters. The former were averse to it, because they did not consider that there was any necessity for inquiry being made, and because they conceived that the proposal to inquire into the amount of church accommodation throughout the country, struck at the very principles on which religious establishments are founded. "If they were to act" (said Dr Cook), "on the principle contended for by their enemies, it would just come to this, that it was a matter of no moment whether there was an Establishment at all. If the government was told that there was enough of religious accommodation, it was of no matter what kind, it would give the enemies of the church an opportunity to alienate the affections of the people from her; and, if it came to this, it would soon follow as an argument, that there was no need for Establishments at all."†

The dissenters did not approve of the appointment of the royal commission, any more than did the claimants for endowments, but upon very different grounds. "From the first" (said the Synod's deputation), "it appeared to them that their acquiescence in the proposed inquiry might involve, on their part, a concession that the matter in dispute afforded a proper case for government interference and parliamentary aid. We saw at once that we could not consistently approve of a measure which led to this conclusion; our opposition to the scheme of endowments resting on this,

\* The commissioners appointed for the purposes specified in this motion were,—the Earl of Minto, G. C. B. ; Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone ; John James Hope Johnstone, Esq. M. P. ; Robert Bell, Esq. procurator of the Church of Scotland ; James M. Nairne, Esq. of Dunsinnan ; Thomas Henry Lister, Esq. ; John Shaw Stuart, Esq. ; John James Reid, Esq. ; Andrew Coventry Dick, Esq. ; Henry Baxter, Esq. ; Edward Horsman, Esq. ; and George Logan, Esq. secretary.

† See report of Dr Cook's speech at the meeting of the General Assembly's commission, 30th September, 1835.



among other grounds, that, in principle, such an application of the public money would be impolitic and unjust; that it is neither the scriptural nor the efficient mode of providing for the spiritual wants of the people. The question with the deputation was simply, whether concurring in the proposal would be a surrender, and if so, how far, of this fundamental ground of objection?" "The course we pursued was shortly this; we asserted, and continued to assert, what we conceived to be the scriptural and equitable mode of maintaining and extending the means of religious instruction; but, having nothing to fear, and much to hope for, from an investigation of facts, we expressed our readiness to give the requisite information, and in every way, as far as might be in us, to facilitate the business of inquiry."\*

As one of the individuals appointed on the royal commission, had published a book against civil establishments of religion,† and as some of the other members had publicly expressed sentiments decidedly unfavourable to the principle of a religious establishment, the commission of the General Assembly considered it their duty to testify against the appointment of these persons by the Crown. A private remonstrance on the subject was sent off to government, on the 31st of July, by the church-extension committee, to which no answer was returned.‡ A condemnatory motion was brought forward by Dr Patrick Macfarlane, at the meeting of the Assembly's commission, on the 13th of August, 1835. This motion was to the following effect:—"That the commission of the General Assembly feel it incumbent on them, in the discharge of their duty to the Church of Scotland, to state to the government the sentiments they en-

\* Report of Deputation appointed by the United Associate Synod, p. 11.

† See a *Dissertation on Church Polity*, by Andrew C. Dick, Esq. This is an ably written book. Whether we consider the elegance of its diction, the logical precision of its reasoning, or the calm spirit of philosophical inquiry which pervades all its pages, it is well entitled to hold a place in the very first class of those talented productions which have issued from the press, on the subject of ecclesiastical establishments.

‡ See report of Dr P. Macfarlane's speech at the meeting of the Assembly's commission, on the 13th of August, 1835.

ertain of the constitution of the commission, that they do not consider it entirely friendly to the church, individual members having publicly professed opposition to the connexion between church and state; and, farther, that, with few exceptions, it does not contain the names of individuals of experience, or men interested in the church; and that, on these grounds, the commission is not entitled to the confidence of the church." This motion was opposed by Sir James Gibson Craig, who moved, "That, in the absence of the instructions to the commissioners, it was inexpedient for the Assembly to proceed farther in the matter."

After a considerable discussion, Dr Macfarlane's motion was carried by a large majority, ninety having voted for it, while only three (including the mover), voted for Sir J. G. Craig's amendment.

When the instructions issued by government to the royal commissioners, were made public, an extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly's commission, convened by a circular from the moderator (the Rev. Dr Thomson of Perth), was held on the 30th of September, to take them into consideration. The numerous attendance of members showed the strong excitement which this subject had produced among the friends of the Establishment. The sederunt consisted of eighty-five ministers, and seventy elders. After a long speech by Dr Chalmers, in which he gave an account of the proceedings of the Assembly's deputation in London, in the month of June, the following motion was proposed by Dr Cook; and, after some discussion, was unanimously adopted, with the exception of two or three members, who stated that they dissented from certain parts of it:—

"The commission having maturely deliberated upon the instructions to the royal commissioners for inquiring into the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, express their deep regret that his Majesty's ministers have not been pleased, in consequence of the judgment of the last meeting of the commission of the General Assembly, to make any change in the

composition of the said royal commission ; and whereas that commission, from its authorizing the commissioners to inquire generally into the opportunities of religious worship, the means of religious instruction, and the pastoral superintendence afforded to the people of Scotland, may be, and has been, interpreted as at variance with the principles and polity of the Established Church, and as calculated to weaken or overthrow it, particularly in so far as it seems to involve in it a principle subversive of this, and all other ecclesiastical establishments, viz. that whenever religious instruction and pastoral superintendence are found, to a certain extent, afforded by any sect or denomination whatsoever, there the services of a national church are not required, and may be dispensed with. The commission of the General Assembly publicly and solemnly protest against whatever has such a tendency, and declare that they consider it to be the sacred duty of the legislature to support and to protect the national church, and to secure accommodation and religious instruction to the people of Scotland, so that they may attend regularly upon divine ordinances, and may profit by the pastoral exertions and superintendence of its ministers. With a view to these most important objects, and under the protestation herein contained, they approve of such members of the church, as may be required to do so by the commissioners nominated by his Majesty, furnishing accurate information as to all statistical matters ; and also approve of all church courts allowing inspection of, or giving extracts from, their records, of all entries relating to the same matters ; it being clearly understood that the commission of the Assembly hold, that it is not competent to the commissioners to put to individual members any questions relating to the doctrine, worship, government, or discipline of the church."

At the first meeting of the United Synod, held (October 1835), after the return of their deputation from London, a gratifying account was given by the deputation, of their proceedings while in the metropolis. The Synod "unanimously agreed to return their most hearty thanks to the members of



the deputation, for the fidelity, wisdom, zeal, and ability with which they performed the important and arduous service assigned to them ;” and they were requested “ to take measures for the immediate publication of their report.”

The following resolutions were adopted in reference to the appointment of the royal commission :—

“ That the Synod learned, with much satisfaction, that the government had not acceded to the application of the Established Church of Scotland, ‘ for an immediate grant of money to all the chapels of ease and new churches which have been built, or are now in progress of building, throughout the country.’

“ That although decidedly of opinion, that a demand for an endowment ought to have been rejected absolutely and unconditionally, they regard the appointment of a royal commission, to inquire into the ecclesiastical statistics of Scotland, as matter of high satisfaction, being fully persuaded that no accurate and sufficient information on this important subject is at present possessed by the legislature or the government ; and farther, they are of opinion, that the amount of church accommodation, and of religious instruction, and of pastoral superintendence, furnished by the several religious denominations in Scotland, as well as the amount of ecclesiastical funds, not at present employed for ecclesiastical purposes, are, in the present circumstances of the country, legitimate subjects of the proposed inquiry.

“ That although, in the composition of the commission, it is obvious that no just or adequate proportion has been afforded to dissenters, there being of the eleven commissioners only one dissenter for a population in which, at a moderate computation, dissenters are to churchmen, as two to three, they are desirous to afford every aid and facility to such an inquiry.

“ That they have learned, with much surprise and disappointment, that it is in contemplation to confine the inquiry to those places where, according to the statements of the Established Church, a deficiency of church accommoda-

tion, and of religious instruction, is said to exist, and would respectfully but earnestly remonstrate against this limitation, because it will occasion just dissatisfaction to the dissenters throughout the country, and can only lead to partial and defective conclusions, instead of securing that ample and correct information, on the subject of inquiry, which constitutes the only safe and reasonable basis of wise and impartial legislation with regard to them; and to obtain which, was understood to be the object of the appointment of the commission."

It was further agreed, that a memorial, embodying these resolutions, should be presented to Lord John Russell, his Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department. A memorial was accordingly prepared by a committee; and, being subscribed by the moderator and clerk, in name of the Synod, was forwarded to his Lordship.

The following communication was received from his Lordship, acknowledging the receipt of the memorial:—

*" Whitehall, December 7, 1835.*

" GENTLEMEN,—I have taken into consideration the memorial of the ministers and elders of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church of Scotland, which reached me in the beginning of last month.

" It appears to me, that the Synod have not sufficiently taken into their view, the origin of the church commission. It arose, not from any wish on the part of the government, nor indeed, as I understood, of the people of Scotland, that the strength of the different religious denominations should be measured, or from a desire to compare the efficiency of the dissenting system, with that of the Established Church.

" It arose, on the contrary, from a petition for a grant of public money from the church; and a determination, on the part of the House of Commons, not to agree to such a grant without a previous inquiry into the grounds upon which the petition rested.

" It is not, therefore, a principal object of the commission to obtain statistical information as to the relative number of different sects, or to institute a comparison between the principle of an establishment, and what is called the voluntary principle.

" The Established Church have declared that they are in want of funds, and that religion suffers in consequence of that want. The

first duty of the commission appointed by his Majesty, is to give them every facility for making out their case.

“ At the same time, the commissioners have shown, and most properly, the greatest readiness to pay attention to any information which can be afforded them by dissenting ministers. If the Synod are of opinion that they can satisfactorily prove that any deficiency now existing in the means and opportunities of religious worship and instruction can be supplied by the energy and exertions of the dissenters, I am convinced that the commissioners will listen to any facts or statements which the Synod can bring forward for that purpose.

“ I confess I do not perceive the justice of the last argument urged by the Synod. On the supposition that a dissenting chapel has been built for a population not provided for by the church, this must have happened either in a parish where churchmen do not complain of want of means, or where they do so complain. In the former case, no additional contributions from the dissenters will be required. If, on the other hand, the church complains of want of means in such a parish, the limitations stated in my letter to Lord Minto will not apply; and every circumstance of the case will be fairly and impartially investigated by the commissioners.

“ I shall communicate a copy of the memorial of the Synod, and of my reply, to the commissioners, and you may rest assured that no positive restriction will be placed on their inquiries, except that which is required by an anxious desire on the part of my colleagues and myself, not to render their labours fruitless and interminable. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your most obedient humble servant,

“ J. RUSSELL.”

On the 27th of April, 1836, the United Synod took under their consideration this answer from Lord John Russell, to the memorial; and, after some deliberation, they resolved that another memorial should be prepared, and forwarded to his Lordship. They also appointed the ministers in Edinburgh and Leith, with the elders from their sessions, a committee (Mr Harper of Leith convener), “ to watch over the steps which may be taken to increase the number of places of worship, and of endowments, in connexion with the Established Church.” All presbyteries and individual members were enjoined to keep this object in view, and to give such information to the committee as might serve for their direction.



During the elections that took place, in the summer of 1837, for a new parliament, after the accession of her present Majesty to the throne, the granting of endowments to the national church, was one of the testing questions put to candidates ; and a large proportion, if not the whole, of the Scottish elections were decided chiefly on this ground. Many liberal churchmen united with dissenters in returning members of parliament, who were known or supposed to be hostile to the granting of endowments. As Scotland returned, in that election, a decided majority of liberal members, the greater part of whom expressed themselves in very decided terms on this question, this may be regarded as furnishing a strong presumptive proof, that the voice of the majority of electors, in this northern part of the Island, is against the claims of the national church upon this point.

A report became prevalent, during the winter of the year now mentioned, that it was the intention of her Majesty's ministers to grant endowments to the Church of Scotland from the Bishops' Teinds,—a fund which government supposed to be at their own disposal, and which they conceived to be available for religious purposes. This report produced alarm among the various classes of dissenters, and roused them to increased activity. Large meetings were held in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and in other towns, to petition against any grant being made from this or any other fund. To give a grant to the national church from the Bishops' Teinds, it was affirmed, would be as unjust and as obnoxious to dissenters, as granting a sum directly from the consolidated fund ; the one being as much national property as the other.

In the month of January 1838, extraordinary meetings were convened, by circular, of the United Associate and Relief Synods, and of the Congregational Union of Scotland, to consider what measures it would be proper to adopt, in order to oppose the threatened grant. So great was the interest excited among the members of these various associations, that, though the meetings were called at a very inclement season of the year, they were numerous attended by

ministers and laymen, assembled from all parts of the country. Strong resolutions were adopted at all of these meetings ; and memorials embodying the resolutions were prepared and addressed to her Majesty's government. It was further resolved to send deputations to London, to obtain an interview with the leading members of government, to wait upon members of parliament, and to use every mean in their power to prevent the meditated act of injustice from being perpetrated. The United Synod appointed a special committee to watch over this business ; and the committee was instructed " to adopt whatever measures they might deem necessary, in order to the attainment of the object in view ; particularly, to recommend it, if they should see cause, to every presbytery, and session, and congregation, under the inspection of the Synod, to petition parliament on the subject ; to use means for rousing their countrymen in the chief towns in England, to a sense of the enormity of taxing all the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland, in order to gratify the humour of a few so called church-extensionists in Scotland ; and to solicit the powerful aid of the more active and influential among the English dissenters."

Early in spring, the Rev. Dr Beattie, and the Rev. Messrs Harper and King, proceeded to London, as a deputation from the United Associate Synod, to lay before her Majesty's government the Synod's memorial, and to take such steps as they might think proper, for defeating the proposed grant of endowments from the Bishops' Teinds, or from any public fund whatever. While engaged in the metropolis, executing the task assigned them, they enjoyed the co-operation of the Rev. Drs Heugh and Wardlaw of Glasgow, who had been appointed, along with Mr Harper, as deputies on the same errand from the Scottish Central Board ; and also of the Rev. John French, one of the Relief ministers in Edinburgh, who had been commissioned to the same work by the Synod to which he belonged. The whole of these gentlemen, though representing different bodies of dissenters, acted in concert. Distinguished as they are for their excellent business habits,

for the urbanity of their manners, for their general talents, and for their thorough acquaintance with the questions which they were required to propound and discuss, it is scarcely possible that a more happy selection could have been made of individuals fitted to act as representatives of the Scottish dissenters in the South. During their sojourn in the British metropolis, they were altogether unremitting in their labours. They were literally "instant in season and out of season." Commoners and peers of the realm heard from their lips doctrines which they had not previously been accustomed to hear. Distinguished statesmen and members of parliament, in the repeated audiences which they held with them, had their minds inoculated with wholesome truths, on the subject of endowed and unendowed churches, which, like good seed dropped into a fertile soil, may spring up at no distant period, and produce the very best of fruit.

The members of the deputation were zealously seconded in their exertions by many of the most influential dissenting ministers in London, and by not a few of the people connected with their congregations. A large and most enthusiastic meeting was held on the 7th of April, at the City of London Tavern, to petition both houses of parliament against granting additional endowments to the Church of Scotland. At this meeting, Charles Lushington, Esq., M. P., presided; and an excellent spirit was displayed in behalf of the cause, for the promoting of which they were assembled. The addresses of the deputation were warmly responded to by the crowded audience; and speeches, advocating the claims of Scottish dissenters, were delivered by Mr Baines, M. P. for Leeds; Mr Gillon, M. P. for the Falkirk district of Burghs; and also by several of the London ministers. The labours of the deputation were not confined to the metropolis. They visited, in detachments, some of the large provincial towns of England, where meetings were held, equally numerous and enthusiastic with the one that took place in London, and where dissenters and liberal churchmen vied with one another in expressing their determination to oppose



any additional grants of money being made, out of the public treasury, to the Church of Scotland.

Meanwhile, the Scottish church-extenders were not idle. They sent a deputation to London, to represent their case to her Majesty's ministers. This deputation visited the metropolis at the same time with the dissenting deputies, and laboured with no less zeal and assiduity in endeavouring to accomplish the object of their mission. The intentions of the ministry, with regard to the endowment question, were at length made public; and, from the declarations which they made in parliament, it became apparent, that, though they could not well avoid doing something, they were resolved to do as little as they possibly could. The following is an outline of the course which Lord Melbourne, First Lord of the Treasury, stated it was the design of the ministry to pursue, with regard to religious instruction in Scotland:—

1. That the Bishops' Teinds shall be applied in providing for the religious destitution existing in certain Highland and rural parishes, having no unexhausted teinds.

2. That an alteration shall be made of the Act, 1707, respecting the division of parishes in Scotland, so as to afford increased facilities for the application of the unexhausted teinds in the hands of private proprietors, to relieve the destitution of such rural parishes as have unexhausted teinds belonging to them.

3. That nothing shall be done for the towns; that no grant shall be made from any source to provide additional means of religious instruction for them.\*

This intended scheme, when it was first announced, shared the common fate of all half measures. It pleased neither party. The dissenters were not satisfied with it, because it granted too much. They condemned it, because it distinctly recognised the principle of granting additional endowments, though to a limited extent. The advocates for

\* See report of proceedings of the General Assembly, 22d May, 1838.

church-extension were equally dissatisfied with it, because it did not at all answer either their demands or their expectations. At the first meeting of the General Assembly held (May, 1838) after the intentions of government were made public, a series of resolutions was adopted; lamenting the sad religious destitution that prevailed; mourning over the apathy of her Majesty's ministers on this subject; accusing them of a dereliction of a public duty, and of violating a pledge "held out by the previous proceedings of government, in so far as the great towns are concerned, to the church and people of Scotland;" and calling upon the friends of church-extension not to be discouraged by the undutiful conduct of the state toward the church, but heroically to persevere till they had "secured the triumph of their cause."

No steps have as yet been taken to carry the above scheme into effect. Though Sir Robert Peel declared in his place in parliament, during the summer of 1838, that he intended, at an early period of the ensuing session, to call the attention of the House to the claims of the Church of Scotland for additional endowments, yet he has, since the commencement of the present session (1839), observed a profound silence on the subject. Not the slightest indication has been given of any intended movement being made either by him or by his supporters in the House. The question of endowments may, therefore, in the mean time, be considered, in so far as parliament is concerned, if not finally set at rest, at least in a state of abeyance. Neither the ministerial nor the opposition parties in the House seem inclined to sympathize with the cry that has been raised about religious destitution in Scotland. From the circumstance of no voice having been lifted up this session, in either the upper or the lower house of parliament, in behalf of the demands of the church, it has been inferred that she has given offence to her political friends, by the proceedings of her judicatories in opposing the decisions of the civil court on the Auchterarder and Lethendy cases; and also by the un-

guarded and uncourteous language which some of her ministers employed, in reference to the episcopalian church, when lately celebrating the second centenary of the General Assembly, that met at Glasgow in 1638.

The dissenters of Scotland have been reproached and vilified, in no measured terms, by the supporters of the church-extension scheme, for the strenuous, and hitherto successful, opposition which they have given to the granting of endowments out of the public funds. They have been accused of disregarding the spiritual interests of the poor, of attempting to check the progress of religion in their native land, and of seeking to gratify a fierce and rancorous partisanship, at the expense of their country's welfare. The cry has been raised, loud and long,—“Lo ! there are tens, nay hundreds, of thousands of our poor countrymen perishing for lack of knowledge ; and these heartless, agitating, political dissenters, will neither impart unto them the means of grace themselves, nor permit others to do so !” The attempt which dissenters have been making to oppose the aggressive schemes of the church-extension party, has been represented as so utterly irreligious, so daringly impious, that no person who is engaged in the unhallowed undertaking (it has been publicly affirmed) can with a good conscience present a prayer to the throne of God for success to crown his exertions.

Such statements as these, however sincere and honest the persons may be who utter them, are certainly not “the words of truth and soberness.” To show how completely they are at variance with the facts of the case, and with the rules of charity and of common equity, it may be proper to state, in a few sentences, how the matter stands in this struggle between the Establishment and dissenters.

For more than a hundred years, the great mass of the people of Scotland were sadly neglected by the ministers connected with the Established Church. Little or no attention was paid either to their wishes or their wants by their spiritual rulers. The population went on, year after year, increasing. New villages sprung into existence, and the old



towns were greatly extended. Not only were no exertions made by the ecclesiastical judicatories of the Establishment to provide the means of religious instruction for the many thousands, who were destitute of it, but, in general, obstacles were thrown in the way of the erection of additional places of worship. Nor was this the worst of it. The people were not permitted to have any voice in the election of their ministers. Persons whom the people hated and despised were thrust in, by the strong arm of power, upon the parishes. In large districts of the country the gospel was not faithfully preached, ministerial visitations were neglected, and, while the stipend was drawn as regularly as the term day came round, the work, for which the stipend was paid, was not performed. In these circumstances, the Secession first arose, then the Relief, then the Independents and Baptists, and other dissenting communities. Churches, or, as they were contemptuously termed, *meeting-houses*, were built by the spontaneous liberality of the people in localities where no place of worship had ever been erected before—congregations were formed—ministers were called and ordained, and supported by the voluntary contributions of their flocks. The supineness and stateliness of the established clergy contrasted most unfavourably, in the eyes of the Scottish peasantry and mechanics, with the activity and homeliness of the dissenting ministers. The latter, notwithstanding the occasional attempts made to keep them down, like the Hebrews in Egypt, “multiplied and grew.” In the course of less than a century, they increased to the amount of several hundreds,\* and many of them had

\* A writer in the April number of the United Secession Magazine (present year), gives an abridged view of the results of the Church Commissioners’ statistical inquiries ; from which it appears, that the number of dissenting congregations visited by the Commissioners, amounted to 756 ; and the number unvisited by them amounts to 244, making a total of *one thousand* dissenting congregations in Scotland. But several of these congregations are stations or vacancies that have never enjoyed a regularly ordained ministry ; others of them are under the superintendence of lay preachers. Suppose that, in consideration of these circumstances, a deduction be made of 200 from the total amount, which is certainly a liberal allowance for the vacant congregations and the lay preachers, and there will remain the goodly number of

the oversight of large and flourishing congregations. They began to acquire influence in the country from their numbers, and talents, and energy. The cause of dissent prospered in both town and country ; so much so, that, in some localities, its adherents considerably outnumbered those of the Establishment ; and the churches of the one were, in general, much better attended than the churches of the other. At length came the voluntary church controversy, which produced a great excitement among the people, by the novelty and boldness of the change which it proposed accomplishing ; namely, doing away with civil establishments of religion altogether. Men began seriously to inquire, whether it would not be better, both for the nation and for the church, that religion should be left unfettered by any connexion with the state, and that each sect should be allowed to support its own institutions, by means of the voluntary contributions of its adherents ; and the minds of multitudes, who had never before thought upon the subject were completely revolutionized by the discussions that were carried on, so that they were brought to give a decided answer to the question in the affirmative.

In these circumstances, the church-extension scheme was adopted by the General Assembly, and the cry for new endowments arose. It is not concealed by the promoters of this scheme, that the ultimate object in view is the extinction of dissent. Dr Chalmers, and those who are co-operating with him, in carrying on this work, have declared that they will not rest satisfied, until a church in connexion with the Establishment, shall be built in every locality, containing a population of from twelve hundred to two thousand souls ; and until a minister shall be appointed, who shall have the pastoral superintendence of these souls. According to the vocabulary of these persons, every locality is destitute, where there is no place of worship belonging to the Establishment, even though there should be one or more dissenting

800 regularly ordained dissenting ministers in Scotland, a very large proportion of whom will be found to be faithful preachers of the gospel.

churches in the district, with faithful gospel ministers labouring among the population. So high and arrogant are the notions entertained on this point, by the church party, that a public and solemn protest, as we have seen, was entered by the Commission of the General Assembly on their record, against the government, for presuming to authorise the Royal Commissioners to inquire into the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence, afforded by dissenters as well as by the national church, on account of its involving "a principle subversive of this and all other ecclesiastical establishments." Acting according to their favourite theory, of parcelling out the whole population among the ministers belonging to the Established Church, and regarding the dissenting ministers and their congregations as mere non-entities, that ought not to be mentioned nor taken into account in any shape whatever, they have put down many of the newly erected churches in localities where dissenting places of worship have long been in existence, with but a thin population, and where there was not the slightest want either of church accommodation or of pastoral superintendence.

It is for the support of churches built in such circumstances, as well as of the old Chapels of Ease, that endowments are clamorously demanded from the public treasury; and dissenters say to their brethren in the Establishment, "No; endowments you shall not have, if we can help it; for we think it wrong, in point of principle, to grant endowments out of the public funds to any sect; and, in an especial manner, we regard it as both unjust and oppressive to be compelled to pay even the smallest sum, either directly or indirectly, for the support of churches that have been erected where there was no particular need for them, and without any apparent object in view but the scattering of our congregations and the ruin of our cause."

Dissenters cannot, and do not object to the adherents of the Establishment building as many churches as they please, and building them where they please, provided they erect



and maintain them at their own expense, in the same way that dissenters erect and maintain theirs. But it is scarcely possible to conceive of injustice or effrontery greater than that which is involved in the church-extension scheme. *First*, deliberately to propose a plan intended to ruin the cause of dissenters ; *Secondly*, to ask money from the public treasury for the purpose of carrying this plan into effect, and thereby make dissenters indirectly lend a helping hand in ruining their own congregations ; *Thirdly*, to accuse dissenters of being political agitators, irreligious, and enemies to the poor and to their country, because they “ set their face like a flint ” against such unreasonable and exorbitant demands. This is no exaggerated account of the state of the case. It is a plain and literal statement of what the church-extension party are actually doing : And all this, too, after the dissenters of Scotland, poor though they be, have erected, during the course of a century, *one thousand* places of worship at their own expense, and chiefly for the accommodation of the poorer classes. Instead of insult and oppressive treatment, they deserve the gratitude of their country. They have shown by their conduct, what the voluntary principle in religious matters is capable of accomplishing, however much it be sneered at in certain quarters. The question is a simple one, and may be easily answered without any great proficiency in arithmetic. If *one-third* of the population, and that by far the poorest portion of it, have erected in the course of a century, and are at this moment maintaining, out of their daily earnings, *one thousand* places of worship in Scotland, how much might have been done in providing the means of religious instruction for all classes, if the other two-thirds, including almost all the great and wealthy in this northern part of the island, had contributed, I do not say a proportional, but an equal amount of their substance with their poorer brethren ? The answer which must be returned to such a question as this will show that, whatever excuses men may be inclined to make in order to save their purses, there is at least no want of ability in this country to provide,

in ample abundance, without any application to the public treasury, the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence for the whole population.

In the course of the controversy, which has been carried on concerning ecclesiastical establishments, much abuse has been lavished on the ministers of the United Secession Church, for the decided part which the great majority of them have taken in opposing establishments. They have been accused of perjury, apostacy, jesuitism, and a total abandonment of the religious principles held by their forefathers. It is easy to apply terms of reproach : To do so requires no particular gift, except the possession of a moderate portion of hardihood ; and it affords no proof that a person is in the right. Besides, it is not the most honourable method of achieving a victory over an antagonist, to endeavour to excite prejudice against the cause which he supports, by attempting to vilify his character. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the voluntary church sentiments held by a large proportion of the ministers of the United Associate Synod, their conduct in the avowal of these sentiments has been open, and honest, and manly. They have aimed at no concealment, and sought no subterfuge ; and on what ground such charges as the above can, with truth, be preferred against them, I am at a loss to conceive. It is true that the Fathers of the Secession, after they were expelled from the national church, declared themselves friendly to the standards and constitution of the church which had treated them so unjustly ; but it is also true, that the very same persons, within little more than ten years after the Secession commenced, officially published, in their Answers to Mr Nairn, sentiments which are as completely subversive of all civil establishments of religion, as any that have been penned during the heat of the present controversy. It is true that the section of the Secession Church which composed the Associate Synod, in the Re-exhibition of their Testimony, formally declared their adherence to the principle of an establishment, while they disowned all persecuting and intolerant measures in religion ;

but it is also true that the other portion of the Secession which constituted the General Associate Synod, when they remodelled their Testimony, formally declared the unlawfulness of the connexion between church and state, and swept away from their public profession every thing that could be construed as giving any countenance to the doctrine of a religious establishment. Again, when the union of the two Synods took place in 1820, a note was appended to the second article of the Basis, which refers to the Westminster Confession of Faith, in which it is expressly declared, that while the United Synod "do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate's power about ecclesiastical affairs," they adhere to the anti-establishment doctrine promulgated by the Associate Presbytery in 1743. And when the Synod published, in 1827, a new Testimony, they introduced a chapter "concerning the relations of Church and State." In this chapter they declared, that "Religion, abstractly viewed, is essential to the well-being of society, and to the efficient exercise of civil government, and is therefore the concern of legislators and of civil rulers, as well as of others, in their several situations;" also that "The christian religion, as might be expected from its divine origin and intended universality, is the best calculated for promoting the interests of civil society, and therefore deserves the countenance of the civil powers:" But they guarded against all misinterpretation of such language, by further declaring, "That the countenance given to it (the christian religion) must not be inconsistent with its own spirit and enactments. It must not be introduced nor propagated by force. It disclaims and prohibits all persecution;" also, "That the church and the state are entirely distinct, capable of existing without the slightest intrusive interference with the proper province of each, and ought not so to interfere. Erastian supremacy of the state over the church, and anti-christian domination of the church over the state, *and all schemes of connexion tending to either, ought to be avoided.*"

With such sentiments as these on record, and with an



explicit declaration, made by the Synod at the period of the reunion, that they "*do not require uniformity of sentiment on the subject of the magistrate's power about ecclesiastical affairs,*" how senseless is the cry about perjury and apostacy.

But I admit, that both the ministers and people of the Secession Church have become, in general, much more decided in their opposition to ecclesiastical establishments, than they have been at any former period of their history. They are taking much higher and firmer ground on the question about establishments. This question has of late years undergone a thorough investigation, and is much better understood in all its bearings. The numerous and able publications that have been put into circulation on this subject, and the many public discussions that have taken place, have produced, among the members of the United Secession Church, a wide-spread and deep-rooted conviction, that civil establishments of religion are unscriptural, unjust, impolitic, and unnecessary. Were a vote to be taken in the United Synod, requiring an expression of opinion concerning them, the voice of condemnation would be loud and general, while the minority would be small indeed, that would lift a voice in their favour. The statements now made are no less applicable to the mass of the people, than they are to the ministers. It is a mistaken impression to suppose that the anti-establishment notions are more prevalent, in proportion, among the ministers, than they are among the people of the Secession. The reverse I firmly believe to be the case. Were the people to be polled, an overwhelming majority, in almost all the congregations, would be found most determined against the connexion between church and state, and keen in favour of voluntary church principles.

In determining whether the Secession ministers and people have done right or wrong, in espousing with such ardour the cause of voluntary churches, in opposition to religious establishments, the question ought not to be, whether the opinions which they hold on this question be the same as those which their forefathers held; but, whether they be

according to Scripture or not. This is the point on which the approbation or disapprobation of their conduct ought to turn. If the opinions which they hold be according to Scripture, then, instead of condemnation, they are entitled to praise, on account of having so generally and so decidedly embraced them, even though they should be different, in some respects, from those of their pious forefathers.

I am no zealot on this much-agitated subject. I have hitherto taken no part in the discussion of it. Any opinions which I held, during the earlier period of my ministry, concerning it, though probably not very decided either way, inclined rather in favour of establishments than against them. In common with many of my brethren in the ministry, I considered that the evils, the grievous evils, connected with the existing establishments in this country, which we all saw and condemned, were not so much owing to the principle of an establishment being in itself wrong, as to that liability to abuse, which is inseparably connected with all human institutions. But I am free to confess, that, from a more extensive course of reading on this subject, and from maturer reflection, my mind has gradually opened to the conviction, the firm and deliberate conviction, that the establishment of the christian religion, in any form, by penal laws, is contrary to the nature of christianity, obstructive of the progress of the gospel, highly injurious to the civil interests of society, and productive of great mischief, in a variety of ways, to the church of Christ. While I do not wish to detract any thing from the learning and ability that have been displayed by those who have written in defence of establishments, the following points have, in my opinion, been most satisfactorily established by the writers on the voluntary church side of the question, namely ; — That neither Christ, the great lawgiver of Zion, nor any one of his inspired apostles, has given the slightest hint, in the New Testament, about such a thing as an establishment being either necessary or intended for the christian church ; that, on the contrary, repeated declarations are made by Christ and his apostles,

which are decidedly in favour of christianity being left entirely free from any alliance with the governments of this world, and of its being permitted to pursue its peaceful and benevolent career, without any compulsory methods being employed either to uphold or propagate it ; that, during the first three centuries, no civil establishment of christianity existed, and yet, during that period, it prospered greatly, not merely without the aid of the civil power, but in spite of a long-continued series of bloody persecutions ; that the establishment of christianity by Constantine the Great, and the subsequent worldly honours which were conferred upon it, if they did not generate, at least multiplied and increased, to a fearful extent, errors and corruptions in the christian church ; that the religious establishments, which have existed, in one form or another, from the time of Constantine till the present period, have been a fruitful source of wars and persecutions among the nations of christendom, and have been productive of incalculable mischiefs to the world ; and, finally, that, in a country where a variety of religious parties exist, to establish and endow any one at the expense of the rest, is a violation of the rules of justice, contrary to sound policy, and throws society into confusion, by occasioning animosities and perpetual bickerings between the favoured and the *tabooed* sects. Such points as these, the voluntary church writers have established, by adducing in support of them a weight of evidence, and bringing to bear upon them a force of reasoning, which have already told powerfully upon the minds of thousands in this country, and which, as time rolls on, will gradually leaven the mass of the community, until “ the whole lump be leavened.” This process the Secession Church has already, to a considerable extent, undergone ; and the consequence is, that it now occupies the position of a *dissenting* as well as a *seceding* community.

I have now completed my review of the Secession History. I have traced its progress from its small and humble beginning, till the present eventful era. I have fully and



faithfully detailed, to the best of my ability, the proceedings of that church, to which I esteem it an honour to belong. Its past course, though marked by occasional reverses, has been upon the whole prosperous. Whatever may have been the faults connected with it, the sound of a faithful gospel ministry has always been heard in its pulpits. It has held forth, with plainness, affection, and fidelity, the word of life, for the benefit of others. While it has pursued its chequered course, amid much opposition from without, and sometimes amid fightings within, it has gradually enlarged the sphere of its operation, and increased the number of its adherents. It has not only been honoured of God, to confer important benefits upon our own island, but Ireland, Nova Scotia, and the States of America, owe to it a debt of gratitude. It exerted itself in sending the gospel to the inhabitants of these countries, when few religious societies took any notice of them. The ministers and people of the Secession Church have done much to promote the cause of education in this country; they have thrown the weight of their influence into the scale of humanity; and they have ever been found on the side of enlightened freedom, struggling against oppression, in all its forms. The Secession has exercised a reflex influence, of a beneficial kind, upon the national church itself, by checking the progress of corruption in it, by exciting a spirit of wholesome rivalry amongst its ministers, and thereby preventing it from becoming wholly stagnant.

The following honourable testimony to the general excellence of the Secession ministers, and to the beneficial influence which they have exercised upon the Establishment, is extracted from a literary periodical, which has not often been guilty of praising dissenters at the expense of the mother church; and it is therefore entitled to greater credit, when at any time it employs the language of eulogy in reference to the former:—"The ministers which belong to the Scottish Secession, are in general men of great moral integrity, considerable learning, and very extensive efficiency,

as Bible, and consequently as useful, preachers. Indeed, I do not know what would now become of the *Mother Church* without them; for, though she assuredly retains a supremacy in all the great essentials of a national establishment; it must be confessed she requires to be looked after, for she has a kind of natural infirmity about her, which strongly induces sleep; and, having sunk for water, amidst the depths of worldly wisdom, her pitcher is not always stored with the most wholesome beverage, nor are her children always so ready as she would wish to use it."\*

With regard to the future progress of the Secession Church, I augur favourably. She is destined still, I trust, to prove for a long number of years, a blessing to our country. She possesses great resources for doing good, and criminal indeed shall she be, if she begin to slumber at her post, and forget the high purpose for which all churches ought to exist,—the advancement of the sacred cause of the Redeemer upon earth. Much though she has done in times past, according to her ability, much more is required of her in time to come. She must not be sparing of her resources, but employ them in a more energetic manner, and on a more extensive scale than she has ever yet done. Let her ministers and people show, by the sacrifices they are willing to make, and by the labours they are willing to undergo, that they are animated by a spirit of entire devotedness to the Saviour; that his honour is dearer to them than any worldly consideration; and that they feel exceedingly grateful to him for the high privileges which they are permitted to enjoy.

Whatever hopes might, in former years, be cherished of the great body of the seceders being brought back again into the fold of the national church, these hopes are now extinguished. The voluntary church controversy has fixed between the Secession and the Establishment, a great gulph, across which at present there is no passage. The former is resolved to maintain, at all hazards, the principle of voluntary churches; the latter is equally resolved that nothing

\* Blackwood's Magazine for December, 1820. P. 273.

shall move it from the ground which it has hitherto occupied, viz. that compulsion is necessary, in some form or another, for the support of religion. These two churches must, therefore, continue moving on, each in its own direction. It will be seen in the issue, which of them is pursuing the safest and most honourable path. Infinite wisdom has its own inscrutable purposes to accomplish, by means of the struggle which is now carrying on; and dark and troubled though the horizon of the religious world at present be, that Almighty Being, who rides in the storm, and directs the whirlwind, may, sooner than we are aware of, say to the conflicting elements, "Peace, be still!" and a hymn of jubilee may ere long be heard ascending upward, loud and harmonious, from the reunited church of Christ, ascribing "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."



## APPENDIX.

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IN this Appendix, I propose giving some account of the statistics of the United Secession Church. It is not my intention to give statistical details of particular congregations. The materials which I have in my possession, would enable me to give a variety of details of this description, with regard to a large portion of the congregations connected with the United Associate Synod. Such a work would be highly interesting and useful. But I have been precluded from giving congregational statistics, at present, by two considerations: First, it would have swelled these volumes to an unreasonable size, or would have required me to add a third to them; and, secondly, some of the ministers, to whom I applied, by circular, for statistical information, felt squeamish at the idea of having any thing published about their congregations; and, to allay their fears, I embodied in my circular a promise that I would not publish any particulars they might state concerning their congregations, without leave asked and obtained. Should, however, the present work meet with any thing like a favourable reception from the public, and should providence be pleased to spare me, I have some design of publishing a work, that shall be supplementary to the present, and which shall consist of historical notices of some of the older, as well as more recently formed, congregations, and which shall contain a variety of statistical information concerning the Secession in general. In the mean time, I shall confine myself to a statement of the general results, which have been carefully deduced from the authentic documents that have been placed at my disposal. These results will be found, on perusal, to be in the highest degree gratifying to the ministers and people of the Secession. They are fitted to convince even the most prejudiced and sceptical, that the voluntary principle, in matters of religion, is a most power-

ful one. They show that this principle, which has been so sadly vilified, and so frequently sneered at, can, even amongst a class of people comparatively poor, and in circumstances peculiarly unfavourable for its operation, achieve wonders.

It may be proper to state, what are the materials from which the following statistical results have been deduced, to show how far they are entitled to credit. In answer to a circular addressed to all the ministers of the United Secession Church, I received 210 returns, containing information on the various points to which the circular referred. By means of the answers returned to the Synod's statistical inquiries, in 1836 and 1837, and also by means of the Reports (lately published) of the Commissioners for Religious Instruction, I have obtained authentic information concerning a considerable number of those congregations, from the ministers of which no answers were returned to my circular; so that, from these various sources, I am enabled to give authentic statements concerning population, communicants, stipends, manses, Sabbath schools, poor, missionary associations, &c., founded on returns from no fewer than 302 congregations. There are still 59 congregations, exclusive of home mission stations, concerning which I have no means of stating any authentic particulars, as they are not included in any of the above returns. But if we take the average of those congregations, the particulars of which have been correctly ascertained, and apply it to those congregations concerning which no information has been given, we will thus arrive at a tolerably accurate estimate with regard to the whole. *Perfect* accuracy, in an investigation of this kind, is scarcely to be expected; because, in any considerably extended society, changes are taking place, during the course of even a single year, by which the calculations will, to a certain extent, be affected. All that any reasonable person can expect is such a degree of accuracy, founded on authentic documents, as will give, upon the whole, a fair and correct view of that society, to which the statistics are designed to apply. Such a view, the Author flatters himself, is here given of the present condition of the United Secession Church. He can safely say, that he has spared no pains in making his calculations accurate; and, in all those cases where the information was not specifically given, but left to be inferred from certain *data* that were furnished, he carefully endeavoured to guard against over-statement, thinking it safest to err on the opposite side. So sensitive has he been on this point, that, however favourable the view of the Secession which is here given, he is firmly convinced that it is even less so than the reality warrants.

The United Secession Church includes, at present, in her commu-

nion, 361 regularly-organized congregations, exclusive of mission stations at home and abroad. These congregations are placed under the superintendence of 22 presbyteries, in subordination to the United Associate Synod. The names of the presbyteries are—Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Falkirk, Dunfermline, Cupar, Kirkaldy, Perth, Forfar, Aberdeen, Elgin, Stewartfield, Orkney, Lanark, Kilmarnock, Wigton, Dumfries, Annan and Carlisle, Selkirk, Coldstream and Berwick, Newcastle, Lancashire, and London. The religious society, which is thus so widely ramified, has existed now for a period of nearly one hundred and six years. It may be gratifying to show the regular and steady progress which it has made, during the past period of its existence, by marking the gradual increase of its ministers and congregations, from one epoch of its history to another.

When the Associate Presbytery was first constituted by the Fathers of the Secession, on the 6th of December, 1733, the number of the brethren who took this important step, amounted only to *four*.

When the General Assembly pronounced sentence of deposition on the members of the Associate Presbytery, on the 15th of May, 1740, their number had increased to *eight*.

Five years after this, when the Associate Presbytery constituted itself into a Synod, on the first Tuesday of March, 1745, the number of the brethren amounted to *twenty-six*.

When the division, occasioned by the burgess-oath controversy, took place, on the 9th of April, 1747, the number of ministers had increased to *thirty-two*.

When the re-union was accomplished, on the 5th of September, 1820, the number of ministers belonging to the two Synods that were united on that occasion, amounted to *two hundred and sixty-two*.

Since that event took place, a period of nearly nineteen years has elapsed; and the number of ordained ministers, who are members of the United Associate Synod, amounts, at the present period, to *three hundred and fifty-seven*, being an increase, since the re-union, of nearly *one hundred* ministers.\*

Again, another method of showing the progressive increase of the Secession, is by marking the number of congregations that have been formed, during each period of ten years that has elapsed, since the commencement of the Secession. The following statement will show this. So far as I have been able to ascertain the dates of the formation of the various congregations in the Secession, the numbers formed during each period of ten years are—

\* If we deduct eight ministers, who did not join the Union Synod, and who are included in the above 262, this will make the increase, since the period of the re-union, to be *upwards of a hundred*.



From the year 1733, when the Associate Presbytery was first constituted,  
till 1740, . . . . . 22 congregations.

From 1740 till 1749, (both years inclusive)	27	.....
... 1750 ... 1759, . . .	27	.....
... 1760 ... 1769, . . .	23	.....
... 1770 ... 1779, . . .	24	.....
... 1780 ... 1789, . . .	33	.....
... 1790 ... 1799, . . .	47	.....
... 1800 ... 1809, . . .	22	.....
... 1810 ... 1819, . . .	24	.....
... 1820 ... 1829, . . .	48	.....
... 1830 ... 1839, . . .	35	.....

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There are 29 congregations, the dates of whose formation I have not as yet been able to ascertain ; and these, of course, are not included in the above enumeration. The reader will perceive, from the statement now given, first, that the union has tended greatly to promote the increase and prosperity of the Secession ; and, secondly, that it still continues to make rapid progress, notwithstanding the heats and animosities occasioned by the discussion of the voluntary church question.

In the following table, I have arranged the returns made from 302 congregations, according to the presbyteries in which the congregations are situated. The table will show the amount of Secession population (including persons of all ages), belonging to each presbytery, so far as the returns go ; the number of communicants ; the amount of stipend paid ; the Sabbath schools and classes ; the number of young persons receiving religious instruction in these schools and classes ; the amount of money annually paid to the poor, and the sum-total collected for missionary purposes by associations in the various congregations. It is necessary, however, to premise, that while, in some of the presbyteries, the list of returns from the congregations is complete, there are others of the presbyteries in which the returns have been only partially made. I have marked the number of returns wanting from each presbytery ; and, in the case of the deficient presbyteries, the reader will understand, that the figures noted down under each head, do not express the whole amount of Secession population, &c. belonging to these presbyteries, but merely the amount of the returns that have been given. I have summed up, at the bottom of the table, the amount total, in each column, of the returns made from the 302 congregations ; and, after taking the average for each congregation, I have added, according to this average, the proportion of the different items belonging to the fifty-nine congregations, from which no returns have been received ; and the reader has thus presented to him, at one view, the gross amount, for the whole United Secession Church, of the various particulars stated in the different columns.

TABLE OF THE STATISTICS OF THE UNITED SECESSION CHURCH.

PRESBYTERIES.	Congrega- tions in each presbytery.	Congrega- tions not reported on	Population in- cluding young and old.	Communi- cants.	Stipends.	Sabbath Schools and Classes.	Scholars.	Amount given to the Poor.	Amount col- lected by Reli- gious Associa- tions.
Edinburgh, -----	37	...	32109	17708	£6454	68	3026	£774	£2406
Glasgow, -----	47	...	42516	19068	8137	119	6592	933	2746
Stirling, -----	22	...	16944	7979	2740	35	2307	213	548
Dunfermline, -----	13	...	14915	6008	1615	18	1325	186	345
Cupar, -----	19	3	9588	4833	1725	24	1075	37	163
Kirkcaldy, -----	8	...	6688	3238	870	9	546	98	78
Perth, -----	25	5	10660	6087	2333	40	1587	237	249
Forfar, -----	19	3	6848	3567	1760	22	1183	100	233
Aberdeen, -----	9	6	2650	1320	500	8	275	61	62
Elgin, -----	13	8	3665	853	550	8	345	14	68
Stewartfield, -----	11	5	2039	797	501	17	567	11	84
Orkney, -----	11	...	8614	4054	1076	66	2457	50	316
Lanark, -----	10	2	4863	2479	673	5	224	57	113
Kilmarnock, -----	22	...	13780	6437	2325	35	2263	243	471
Wigtown, -----	7	1	2926	1350	626	18	545	27	111
Dumfries, -----	12	4	4841	2125	859	8	363	35	46
Annan and Carlisle, -----	14	5	5511	1802	902	18	1461	22	104
Selkirk, -----	12	...	10926	6157	1399	15	1166	39	202
Coldstream and Berwick, -----	21	6	11888	6571	1831	28	1427	29	343
Newcastle, -----	19	7	5299	1560	1180	23	1222	16	135
Lancashire, -----	6	3	2610	600	480	7	830	23	105
London, -----	4	1	2300	886	1050	7	690	147	339
Totals, -----	361	59	222180	105479	£39536	598	31476	£3352	£9272
Add averages for 59 congrega- tions not included in returns. }	...	...	39165	20591	7729	118	6136	649	1770
General Totals, -----	361	59	261345	126070	£47315	716	37612	£4001	£11042

From the statements contained in this table, the following conclusions are deduced :—

The average number of persons, young and old, connected with each Secession congregation, is . . . . .	735 *
The average number of communicants is . . . . .	349
The average amount of stipend paid to each minister (exclusive of sacramental expenses), is . . . . .	£ 131
The average number of Sabbath schools and classes for religious instruction, connected with each congregation, is within a small fraction of . . . . .	2
The average number of scholars receiving religious instruction in these schools and classes, in each congregation, is . . . . .	104
The average amount paid annually to the poor by each session is . . . . .	£ 11
The average amount collected by each congregation, for missionary purposes, is . . . . .	£ 30 *

I shall now lay before the reader, in one view, the whole amount of voluntary contributions collected annually by the congregations of the United Secession Church for the maintenance of gospel ordinances among themselves ; for the support of the poor ; and for the propagation of the gospel, in destitute districts, at home and abroad ; exclusive of occasional congregational collections made for assisting weak congregations, and also for giving aid to public institutions. There is one item which I have not yet noticed, and which it is proper should be taken into the account. This item is the allowance annually made by the greater part, if not the whole, of the congregations for sacramental expenses. As the sum allowed by each congregation for this purpose ranges from five to thirty pounds annually, according to the ability of the congregation, and according to the frequency with which the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is dispensed, I do not estimate this item too high, when I make the annual average for each congregation, to be ten pounds. The following statement will show the total amount of the various items :—

Annual amount of stipends in the United Secession Church,	£ 47,315
Annual allowance for the poor, . . . . .	4001
Collected for missionary purposes, by congregational associations, . . . . .	11042
	<hr/>
Carried forward,	£ 62,358

\* In most of the averages stated above, there is a fraction more than what the figures express. To avoid the appearance of being unnecessarily minute, I have omitted all the fractions.

† This last item includes chiefly what is collected by congregational missionary associations, and given to various religious and benevolent societies. But the sum does not include those collections that are made occasionally, to assist weak congregations, and for other benevolent purposes.



	Brought forward,	£ 62,358
Annual allowance for sacramental expenses £10 for each congregation),		3610
Annual collection for Synod Fund (not included in any of the above items), amount last year,		760
		<hr/> £ 66,728

Let us now endeavour to ascertain the amount of property belonging to the United Secession Church, all of which has been created by the voluntary liberality of its members. The number of churches (exclusive of those that have been erected at mission stations), is 361. The number of manses stated in the returns from 302 congregations (town and country), is 177; and, with regard to the fifty-nine congregations, from which no returns have been made, we may fairly enough suppose that, connected with them, there is an equal proportion of manses. This will give thirty-four additional, or 211 manses in whole.

When we consider that a large proportion both of the churches and manses are new, and also that many of the churches which have been erected of late years, especially in towns, have cost several thousands, it will not be considered too high an average, if we state the value of each Secession Church to be one thousand pounds, and the value of each Secession manse to be four hundred pounds.

361 churches, valued at £1000 each, will give	£ 361,000
211 manses valued at £400 each, will give	84,400
	<hr/> £ 445,400

All this amount of money (nearly half a million sterling), has been expended, in the course of little more than a century, by a religious community, including in it a very small proportion of the wealth of the country, in making provision for the dispensation of religious ordinances, and in the face of great opposition made to them from a variety of quarters. If a comparatively small section of the church has thus been enabled, from the daily earnings of its members, to expend such a large sum of money in rearing edifices in every district of the country, for the worship of God, and in building comfortable manses for its ministers, while, at the same time, it has been contributing liberally every year, not only for the maintenance of a gospel ministry at home, but for the support of missions abroad, what might not have been accomplished by the united efforts of the whole christian community in this country, had not the energies of the people been repressed by the chilling influence of an establishment, and had they not been systematically taught, from their infancy, that the support

of gospel ordinances was a matter in which they had no personal concern.

But then we are told that there is a considerable amount of debt lying on the property of the Secession congregations, and that this is one of the evils connected with the voluntary system of supporting the gospel. I admit that many of the Secession congregations, in common with other dissenting communities, have debt connected with their properties. Still it is true that the sums above mentioned have actually been expended by the people in building churches and manses; and, if they have been obliged to borrow a portion of the money that has been thus expended, this must be regarded as a mere matter of temporary accommodation; because it is not to be expected that when a few individuals, none of whom are probably wealthy, associate together, at first, for the purpose of forming a congregation, they can, all at once, raise from their own resources, a fund sufficiently large for building a church, and it may be a manse additional; and they are therefore obliged, in the mean time, to borrow such a sum as will enable them to complete their undertaking. In a great number of instances, it will be found that this process of borrowing and lending is entirely a matter of accommodation among the members of the congregations themselves, without any foreign party being required to interfere in the business; that is, one or more individuals connected with the congregation, undertake to advance the money necessary for completing the building of a church or manse, for which sum proper security is given by the congregation receiving the accommodation, and a regular interest paid; and the principal is gradually liquidated by successive payments, according to the ability of the congregation, or a portion of the debt is permitted to remain on the property, by the common consent of the parties concerned.

There is nothing in such a transaction as this that militates, in the slightest degree, against the voluntary system; and there is nothing in it which is at all dishonourable to any congregation. It is possible that, owing to unforeseen and unexpected occurrences, congregations may come, in the course of providence, to be placed in circumstances in which they find themselves unable to fulfil the engagements into which they have entered; but instances of this kind will be found to be comparatively few indeed. On the other hand, we have only to point to the numerous churches, and the many comfortable manses, scattered over our land, which have been reared by the voluntary contributions of the people, to show what the power of christian principle is able to effect, in leading men to procure for themselves and families a pure dispensation of the gospel, and also to propagate it amongst their neighbours. Whatever be the struggles which dis-

senters have to make for the accomplishment of these objects, it ill becomes churchmen, who are wholly indebted to the bounty of their country for the religious ordinances which they enjoy, to taunt their dissenting brethren with their debt, or with their pecuniary difficulties, seeing that this is a matter with which no foreign party has a right to interfere, and seeing that the circumstance of dissenters, *voluntarily preferring* to struggle with these difficulties, rather than accept of an invitation to join the Establishment, is a convincing proof that they are at least sincere in the profession which they make.



## POSTSCRIPT.

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WHILE this sheet has been passing through the press, the question concerning the validity of the Veto Act has been decided by the House of Lords. Their Lordships have *affirmed* the sentence, pronounced by the Court of Session, in the Auchterarder Case, referred to in page 503 of this volume. This decides the fate of the Veto Act. It is declared to be illegal by the highest civil tribunal of the country; and it has been found that the presbytery of Auchterarder, in refusing "to take trial" of Mr Young's qualifications, have acted "illegally and in violation of their duty." This decision of the House of Lords shows us the kind of freedom which the Established Church of this country enjoys. It may make decrees—but it has not the liberty of carrying them into effect. When it attempts to make improvements in its system of administration, it finds itself bound hand and foot by those manacles, which the State has imposed upon it, so that it cannot move a single step in advance, without permission from the higher powers. Is this a becoming situation for a church of Christ to be placed in? This certainly is not the freedom wherewith Christ makes his people free. It is most degrading in a society calling itself a church, for the sake of the emoluments which it receives from the State, to continue in a situation, where it cannot act in accordance with what it conceives to be the mind of Christ, unless it previously receive the sanction of an act of parliament. It remains to be seen, in the present instance, whether the Church of Scotland, which boasts of being a lineal descendant of the Covenanters, will throw off the inglorious yoke under which it is placed, by its connexion with the State, and *become a free and voluntary church*—or, whether it will tamely submit to wear its gilded fetters a little longer, and kiss with all due humility the rod, which the civil magistrate has, in the exercise of his duty, been at present applying to it, to check its presumption, and to remind it of its servile dependence upon him.

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